

EXPANSION DESPITE PERMANENT AUSTERITY? INNOVATIVE ASPECTS OF
SOCIAL POLICY IN LIBERAL WELFARE REGIMES

by

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Abstract

This thesis seeks to challenge the entrenched academic consensus that there are no opportunities for welfare state expansion in liberal welfare regimes in the face of neo-liberal economic ideology and new public management reforms to decision-making. It does so through an examination of social policy expansion in early years education and care (EYEC) in England and Canada/Ontario; two liberal welfare states. This thesis contends that EYEC policy, often neglected in comparative welfare literature, is an important social dimension of the welfare state which can potentially alter the relationship between the state, parents and children. Utilising a multi-level discursive institutionalist framework the thesis examines the processes underlying EYEC policy innovations in the two cases. Its first major contribution is an innovative framework of six competing and contrasting discursive EYEC frames and the evidence and expertise pivotal to them. Through this lens, the thesis identifies common institutional reforms that have altered practices of policy making; presenting openings in the bureaucratic structure to new forms of expertise and particular EYEC frames. It also extends the analysis above the national context to examine the influence of the OECD as a form of ideational pressure and the extent of ideational circulation between the two cases. In so doing this thesis captures complex rather than linear trajectories of development and moments of convergence and divergence between the two cases. This thesis finds that in both cases a multiplicity of competing frames and ‘evidence-based’ forms of policy innovation have led to strategic incoherence and an unstable basis for the concrete implementation EYEC policy.

Dedications

This thesis is dedicated to Sean Gleeson and Daniel Wincott, who believed in me when I did not believe in myself.

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INTRODUCTION

A substantial body of current welfare state research is devoted to elucidating the theoretical underpinnings and mapping the empirical complexity of welfare state variations in advanced democracies (Pierson, 2001; Zeitlin and Trubek, 2003). It is also the subject of continuing political interest, especially as the debate about the welfare state remains dominated by the notion of a welfare state crisis (Esping-Andersen, 1999). Constellations of economic and social pressures, processes of globalisation combined with the influence of neo-liberal ideas are said to be putting existing welfare states under threat (King, 1999). In addition, a whole host of endogenous forces associated with post-industrialism, demographic changes and welfare state maturation lead authors to suggest that ‘old’ welfare states seem unresponsive to new social demands (Bonoli, 2005; Hacker, 2004).

Over recent years, historical institutionalist welfare state research has predominantly been concerned with whether these institutions and policies could endure ‘permanent austerity’ or the pressures of retrenchment would inevitably lead to their being substantially undercut (Pierson, 2001; Pierson, 2006). There is a general consensus that the institutional structure of liberal welfare states are particularly vulnerable to these post-industrial pressures and as these policy trajectories are considered to crystallise around a path-dependent logic of ordering, future policy will be likely to be driven by cost-containment and retrenchment efforts (Iversen and Wren, 1998). With very few exceptions, these approaches suggest that liberal welfare states are the last place that we would expect to see novelty, innovations or expansions in social policy and especially those that do not appear to conform to its pre-existing welfare trajectory. Yet recent developments suggest that the fate of liberal welfare

states is not sealed. Certain new policy developments and budgetary commitments have arisen in this seemingly hostile environment.

Against this background, my research started from one basic question; how are we to make sense of the emergence of new policy discourses and the apparent expansion of social policy, including the commitment of significant new resources to it? I have called this the puzzle of ‘expansion despite permanent austerity’. In spite of significant purported constraints, we find evidence of new discourses, policy and resources devoted to early years education and care (EYEC) policies in several states. The present project has been designed to address just this puzzle. Using a comparative design, two ‘unlikely’ cases for expansion despite permanent austerity - England¹ and Ontario/Canada – are analysed in some detail (see chapters 2-5). England and Canada serve as interesting comparative cases and will add to existing welfare state literature as they have not, as yet, been systematically studied in this particular policy area.

In designing and conducting my research, I have found that I have had to address a number of further issues in addition to the primary concern with social policy expansion despite permanent austerity. Two require some discussion here. First, it is surely true that part of the explanation of the emergence of EYEC on the policy agenda is broadly related to social-structural changes – including general processes of change in gender roles and more particularly to the growth of involvement of mothers in formal employment. However, there are differences in the extent and timing of changes in these aspects of the social structures of

¹ Note that note that EYEC provision has been the subject of devolved control elsewhere in the UK, an issue that I do not have the space to address

my two cases. Thus, while the earlier growth of female labour force participation in Ontario/Canada may have helped to trigger the emergence of a more significant and earlier feminist advocacy for childcare rooted in an equality perspective, from the early 1970s, these differences give me relatively little grip on more recent patterns of similarity and difference across the cases. Moreover, prior to expansion in EYEC, both case countries had high female (and maternal) labour force participation, which reduces the salience of an alternative economic rationale for developing these policies.

Second, in the context of previously low levels of public policy concern with and limited public investment in EYEC, the growth of women's participation in formal employment has increased the stresses placed on parents – and particularly on mothers – and also, arguably the 'problem load' on various aspects of state policy. However, it is not accurate to characterise these problems as a 'crisis', 'critical moment' or an 'exogenous shock', in the sense of these concepts that is usually deployed within Historical Institutional theory when accounting for (the rare occurrence of) 'path-breaking' policy change. This combination of factors poses a supplementary 'puzzle' for the present analysis: how are we to make sense of (what may be understood as) significant change and policy innovation in the absence of a 'crisis'?

Taking change as the key issue, this thesis contributes to addressing these important questions by focusing primarily on change at the level of policy discourse and ideas. As should already be clear, this is not because I argue that discourse can account fully for the changes I map and analyse here, but it does provide an important part of such an explanation. In addition, the mapping of discourses and discursive change provides a 'way in' to making sense of the puzzles I have identified. Chapter one contributes to my analysis – and to the literature on

EYEC as well as wider discussions of welfare state change – by elaborating six ways in which EYEC policy has been discursively ‘framed’. These are the maternal care, social engineering, educative, equal opportunities, neuroscience, and child-centred frames. This thesis takes the novel approach of analysing the extensive bodies of expertise and evidence which have supported and/or constructed distinctive EYEC frames.

The following four chapters deal with the experiences of England and Ontario/Canada, featuring a chapter each addressing the historical background (and periods of relative institutional and policy stability) and a chapter addressing more recent changes, in which significant phases of policy innovation have occurred. In these chapters I wish to explain how particular expert EYEC frames have produced multiple discursive opportunities to paths of (policy) action and complex trajectories of policy development. I am particularly concerned with the ways in which particular (or multiple) frames have gained (or lost) ascendance through a dynamic interplay with the (evolving) practices of policy making and the ways in which these processes open and close down opportunities for external EYEC experts and actors and facilitate (or constrain) policy innovation. In so doing, this thesis will capture complex (as opposed to linear) trajectories of development through the case studies. It will also show the similar but distinctive, framing, patterns of policy developments and moments of convergence and divergence between the two cases.

In accounting for ongoing policy change and moments of apparent convergence within the two case studies, I have also extended the methodological scope of most existing historical institutionalist frameworks which often presume that national welfare states (or particular) regimes are presumed closed to transnational influences. In so doing this thesis aims to

reinstate a greater level of contingency into welfare state analysis and fully account for the range of discursive influence in EYEC policy at the national level. Chapter six will assess the possibilities for ideational circulation (in EYEC ideas) between the two cases. This focus on the circulation of ideas – and the existence of similar frames in both of my cases (although the frames do combine in different ways in each of them) – merits closer attention. Its first major section addresses the theoretical and conceptual literature on how the circulation of ideas impacts on public policy. My research into the England – and especially – into Ontario/Canada has revealed that a particular organisation – the OECD – has had some impact and interestingly as a progressive force. Studying the OECD in this aspect, contributes to the wider literature on political economy and the welfare state tends to depict the OECD as a proponent of neoliberalism, including welfare residualisation. For all these reasons, the second part of chapter six explores the role of the OECD in relation to EYEC policies, both as something of an international analogue of my comparative argument for England and Ontario/Canada and as an influence on these two cases.

This thesis has drawn its analysis through extensive documentary analysis and interviews with elite actors, including external experts and advocates for EYEC (working at the national and international levels) and also government actors (at various levels) who have worked on the implementation of EYEC policy in England and Canada. For a list of interviews, please refer to the bibliography.

1. CHAPTER ONE: FRAMES, RESEARCH AND EVIDENCE: THE MANY DISCOURSES OF ‘EARLY YEARS’ AND ‘CHILDCARE’

Within academic and policy-making circles, debates over childcare and, more recently, policies of early education and care have often revolved around disagreements over the underlying meaning and definition of these policies: put simply, what childcare is for and for whom. Underpinning these various policy frames of ‘early years education and care’ (EYEC) are particular discourses of ‘care’ and ‘education’ and each has an attending body of expertise and evidence. Indeed, whilst EYEC policies can often incite highly *emotive* debates in political and academic communities, it is also an area which has called into use a broad canon of *expertise* including the work of developmental psychologists, education experts, feminists, epidemiologists and (latterly) neurologists and economists. It is not often explicitly or clearly noted, but this expertise and evidence has been influential in defining broader political and public debates on EYEC². Moreover, developments in EYEC research, evidence and ideas have, over time, helped to support, given legitimacy to and, in some cases, created new distinct discursive EYEC frames. These different ways of conceptualising early years and childcare; containing both normative ideas and more prescriptive elements within EYEC frames, have led to complex policy trajectories in both England and Canada, as will be described in latter chapters. This chapter aims to shed light on the discursive processes and agential action which have created different policy frames of EYEC. By explaining the kinds

² For a discussion of how ECEC can be framed in order to gain public support for childcare see Mahon in Wincott, 2006, p.290 (and also Friendly and Lero, 2002: p.5.). Wincott outlines Mahon’s five frames: poverty alleviation; female labour force participation; promoting gender equality; investment in human capital; contributing to class/racial equality. In this chapter I wish to explain how evidence and expertise have created different discursive frames and how these have produced complex multiple discursive opportunities to paths of (policy) action.

of expertise, research projects and broader ideas which have formed distinct discursive ‘hubs’ I hope to show how different EYEC policy frames have, over time, concretised around these sets of ‘anchoring ideas’ and by virtue of the work of actors and institutions (both external and more closely linked to the governments of England and Canada) who endeavour to develop, champion and disseminate them.

This subject of this chapter is to map six main EYEC frames (Maternal Care frame; Social Engineering Frame; Educative Frame; Equal Opportunities Frame; Neuroscience Frame; Child-Centred Frame), their roots in different bodies of expertise and evidence and the actors and institutions which have been pivotal in communicating them. These frames have been identified during the course of my empirical research into early years policies. Having interviewed external academics and advocates who have been significant in articulating the need for early years policies during the 1980s and 1990s and also the state actors involved in developing policy, it has become clear that there is a discursive instability within England and Canada’s EYEC policies. This is made manifest in the shifting meanings and perceptions of state actors, the often contradictory elements of policy coexisting together and the (sometimes sharply) changing policy trajectories in both countries. Thus, understanding the discursive construction of early years policies and the evidence and expertise informing them becomes important, as EYEC frames are actively *employed* and *deployed*, externally and internally within policy making arenas. Externally, various EYEC frames have been championed and disseminated at both national and international levels; through advocates, academics and international organisations. Such actors use frames as ‘strategically crafted sets of arguments’ (Fischer, 2003), which aim to persuade and convince policy makers of the need to reform and to promote specific policy alternatives. Internally, policy makers have often relied on this

external expertise to give credibility to their policy choices and they have been utilised as weapons within inter-departmental (and federal/provincial) disputes³. In many ways, the very existence of multiple EYEC frames and their constituent discursive elements have created a wide spectrum of resonance with different civil and political actors but also a tendency towards division between those wedded to a particular EYEC frame. Ultimately, and as will be shown in subsequent chapters, the particular EYEC frame (or frames) being subscribed to by policy actors materialise as qualitatively different types of early years policies on the ground; allowing for radically different types of services and starkly differing levels of quality. Hence, Fischer argues, “ideas thus move to the centre of policy evaluation. As fundamental media of all political conflicts; they make possible the shared meanings and assumptions that motivate people to action and wield individual striving into collective causes... a constant struggle over the very ideas that guide the ways citizens and policy analysts think and behave...[defining] the boundaries of political categories and the criteria of classification – the politics of criteria” (2003: 24.). This chapter seeks to show that how evidence and expertise creates discursive ‘hubs’ around which actors can mobilise their activities and opens up spaces (both discursive and material) to action.

This chapter will be organised as follows. Firstly it will discuss the main EYEC frames, mentioned above. The frames I will outline are not intended to be exhaustive studies of all evidence and expertise that could be identified with particular frames, nor do they necessarily apply to both Canada and the UK. These frames are stylised heuristics or ‘ideal types’ which

³ Interviews with Margaret Hodge, former Minister of State for Children (Department for Education and Skills) (2006) from the UK; and Lynne Westlake, Special Policy Advisor from Human Resources and Social Development Canada. This chapter is primarily focused on the history of early years and childcare expertise and the external academics and advocates involved in creating EYEC frames.

highlight the common discursive elements which bind pieces of evidence and research on early years and childcare. As Hall argues, “any attempt to specify the conditions under which ideas acquire political influence inevitably teeters on the brink of reductionism, while the failure to make such attempt leaves a large lacuna at the centre of our understanding of public policy” (1993, cited in Rich, 2004: 8). The aim is to simply give an illustrative account of common discursive threads and the waves of EYEC research and expertise which have arisen, over time, to inform particular rationalisations for state investment in EYEC or to inform a particular policy model. This will be especially useful when discussing the utilisation of multiple discursive frames and subsequent ‘discursive slippage’ that occurs both in policy documents and through the conceptions of state actors.

1.1 Maternal Care Frame

A ‘maternal care frame’ views ideas about early years education with suspicion. It instead prioritises ideas about care and especially, mothers care. It draws on a pro-maternalist discourse, which views the ideal care arrangement for young children (especially those under three) as full time mother care, ideally performed at home (Kremer, 2006: 264.). Hence, within this frame, the function of state regarding childcare is limited to catering for those children seriously ‘at risk’ whose mothers have ‘failed’ in their maternal duties. Moreover, wherever possible, forms of childcare should try to emulate a domestic setting⁴. State childcare, in this case, is for the welfare of the child and it is the choice of last resort: lone parents who have no option but to go out to work, are ill, incapable of giving children the care

⁴ Often the child care from family members, friends, nannies or childminders. Implicitly this is a private matter, as this frame views state interference into child rearing matters an invasion of privacy and indeed condoning policies which may induce women to leave their maternal roles.

they need or for whom day care might prevent the breakdown of the mother or break-up of the family (Randall, 2000: 61.). In terms of the policies that this pro-maternalist discourse promotes, childcare places at state nurseries should be restricted to those with no other option and the eligibility is to be tightly restricted so as to prevent those without the most desperate of situations from accessing them. In the years before World War I and post World War II ⁵, the pro-maternalist discourse was an ideal that became hegemonic in many welfare states, although it disappeared quickly in some Scandinavian countries after the 1950s (Kremer, 2006: 264.). Originally, during the first decades of the twentieth century, eugenic and neo-hygienist arguments were dominant sets of expertise that informed and reinforced the ascendancy of a pro-maternalist discourse. This expertise was directed to ensuring that mothers kept their children clean and well nourished (Penn, 1999: 3.). In contrast, nurseries were considered sites of infection and there were particular health concerns around group care. Such issues were reflected in the UK by the Committee of the Medical Women's Federation, which concluded from two surveys of nursery children, carried out in 1944-5 that 'the outstanding fact is the constant and considerable increase of respiratory tract infection' (Randall, 2000: 39.). Traditional ideas of the nuclear family reinforced these ideas in the UK and Canada. Even the National Council of Women of Canada (NCWC), who were supposedly pro-equal opportunities argued 'As women, we want to live in a Canada in which

⁵ For a discussion of the World War years and the establishment of the War Nurseries, albeit temporary as they were precipitated by acute labour shortages and fiercely resisted by the Ministry of Health, see Randall, 2000. These nurseries were quickly wound up after the war, the Exchequer grant available for nurseries was halved and responsibility for them was devolved to local authorities and buildings that had been requisitioned, returned (p.39.). Similarly in Canada, World War II resulted in labour shortage which Prime Minister Mackenzie King responded to with the Dominion-Provincial Wartime Day Nurseries Agreements which committed the federal government to share with the provinces the costs of creating child care centres for mothers working in war related industries. This funding was withdrawn by Ottawa in 1945 and many of the centres created in Ontario closed down (see Kershaw, 2005: 76.).

we can raise our children in our own homes and in the schools of our choice, not in public institutions under the guidance of the state' (Finkel, 2006: 201.).

However, the most influential set of expertise to influence and reinforce a maternalist discourse of childcare was a 'new psychology' (sometimes referred to as Depth Psychology) developed during the forties, which Nikolas Rose defines as 'a group of English doctors and psychologists, many engaged in therapeutic work, who, whilst recognising the revolutionary discoveries of Freud, sought to dispense with the central concepts of his system and combine the remainder with theories drawn from other domains' (Hendrick, 1994: 164.). In this science 'character' was the product of 'instincts' that required to be channelled in order to produce a 'normal' child (ibid.). Thus the emotional condition of children - not just their health - became important to experts advising the UK government. In particular, experts honed in on the emotional environment of the family; specifically, the consequences of the separation of the parent (especially mothers) and the child for future development and to avoid delinquency. The idea, closely associated with John Bowlby, Director of Child Guidance at the Tavistock Clinic, and known as maternal deprivation, was popularised in his seminal study, *Maternal Care and Mental Health* (1951) (Hendrick, 1994: 219.). Bowlby constructed an ethological theory which asserted the biological basis of early emotional attachments. He argued that both mother and baby were genetically programmed to seek contact with one another. From this a deep emotional bond was thought to develop which (if broken by even brief separation) led to serious distress for both child and mother (Ball, 1994: 12.). This has provided an apparently scientific basis for popular views, such as 'the mother's place is in the home' or 'childcare and early learning that separates children from the mother may be harmful' (ibid.).

Simplified versions of this thesis have conditioned policy makers during the post-war years, who have also been able to avoid developing nursery provision by capitalising on the Bowlby-induced state of guilt amongst mothers. In the UK where this expertise was interpreted most conservatively, mothers were discouraged from working and placement of babies in nurseries was heavily discouraged, save for those children severely ‘at risk’⁶. Evidence of this frame in operation can be found in the UK Plowden report: ‘it is generally undesirable, except to prevent a greater evil, to separate mother and child for a whole day in a nursery... it is no business of the education service to encourage these [working mothers]’. (CASE, 1967, cited in Browne, 1996: 372.). Under this frame, childminders are acceptable forms of childcare for those seeking work (though it is clearly less than ideal), as these emulate as closely as possible ‘a domestic setting’ and a ‘mother replacement’. As the maternal care frame is hostile to state ‘institutional’ intervention it may favour private or voluntary sessional EYEC such as playgroups, so supplement the primary care role of the mother.

Although the maternal deprivation thesis has been widely challenged in the academic community and especially by those working in the education field, a ‘maternal care frame’, based on the notion that childcare is damaging to children (especially in the very early years) and hence maternal care should be instead promoted, persists in policy discussions. In terms of research, ideas of ‘parental warmth’ in parent-child relationships which benefit subsequent

⁶ In Canada, there was a similar concern that group care was ‘over stimulating’ for children and that a mother’s care was best, during the 1950s. The recommended alternative to parental care for young children was foster care with a “day-time mother”, according to the Graduate Nurses Association (Prochner, 2000: 55.). Daycare was also often viewed as being a precipitator of juvenile delinquency (see Finkel, 2006: 209.).

cognitive and behavioural outcomes continue to feed negative perceptions of childcare. As Brennen and Moss suggest, the rationale has shifted towards ‘mothers as unfolders of their children’s cognitive capacities’, rather than simply preventing delinquency and mental disturbance in children (Randall, 1995: 343.). Bretherton (1985) argues that ‘children who have a secure sense of attachment particularly as infants, subsequently approach cognitive tasks in ways conducive to cognitive development... more curiosity, persistence and enthusiasm and less frustration than less securely attached infants’ (cited in Feinstein, Duckworth and Sabates, 2004: 24.). Even into the late 1990s, Masten and Coatsworth (1998), have suggested that children, whose interactions with their mothers are warm and involved, are more likely to be competent and less likely to exhibit problems than children without such positive parental interactions (ibid.).

In Canada, social conservative advocates such as R.E.A.L women (Real, Equal and Active for Life), have been prominent in policy debates since the 1980s⁷ and actively pursue a ‘maternal care frame’ for EYEC. As a group supporting traditional gender roles, R.E.A.L women (2001) argue that ‘women should have a genuine choice, financially and socially, to remain at home as full-time mothers, if they choose, especially when their children are young (Kershaw, 2005: 60.). As the R.E.A.L women’s position paper on childcare states ‘Real Women of Canada does not support the concept of universally available, government subsidized day care. Universal day care is an imposed government plan of institutional care for children. Studies show that for young children, the family setting is usually preferable’ (2008). Similar debates in the media have emphasised a maternal care frame (and indeed in some instances

⁷ And particularly active at a conference I attended whilst undertaking fieldwork in Canada, *Securing the Future for Our Children*, 26th October 2006. It was a common occurrence, according to other attendees for R.E.A.L women to attend and demonstrate at childcare conferences.

sought to perpetuate it), through selective reporting of research evidence which states that childcare is harmful to children. For example, the recent reporting of the first findings from a longitudinal study by Leach, Sylva and Stein, *A prospective study of the effects of different kinds of care on children's development in the first five years* (1998-ongoing) in *The Times* stressed that ‘mother’s care is best for the first three years... children cared for by anyone other than their mothers tended to show higher levels of aggression or were inclined to become more withdrawn, compliant and unhappy’ (Bale, 2005). The issue of quality and conversely the numerous problems with low-quality private EYEC that the report summary clearly states is a factor in outcomes⁸ is not clearly addressed in the same way as a similar *Guardian* article which states “it highlighted a demand for developmentally appropriate high-quality childcare” (Press Association, 2005). It highlights the implicit favouring of maternal care.

A maternal care frame will thus seek to include measures to promote and facilitate mothers care of young children. Extensions to maternity leave and other cash benefits to support women (or in some cases fathers) to look after children are prioritised in policy discussions. It encourages the development of voluntary and part-time supplements to maternal care such as playgroups and mother and toddler groups. For those requiring childcare, childminders/nannies are favoured, so as to emulate domestic settings as near as possible. In the worst case scenario, where children are ‘at risk’ as defined above, ‘welfare’ nurseries will suffice as a substitute for maternal care, linking together social services and health for the

⁸ See the detailed research report on the FCCC website:
http://www.familieschildrenchildcare.org/fccc_frames_home.html

protection of the child⁹. Being sceptical of the effects of full-time group care and prioritising policies which preserve maternal/parental care this policy frame does not specify levels of quality (in terms of educational benefits or the holistic socialisation of children.). In the same way it eschews different policy debates over how to deliver the service (ie through supply/demand financing¹⁰, or particularly in Canada, ‘for profit’ versus ‘non-profit’). It is assumed that primary maternal care is the best for developing both emotional and intellectual capabilities.

1.2 Social Engineering Frame

A social engineering frame seeks to utilise EYEC programmes to ameliorate social and educational disadvantage and intergenerational transmissions of poverty for children at risk. Here, it is important to note that risk is defined differently to conceptions of risk as outlined in a maternal care frame. The maternal frame implicitly favours maternal care as the basis of secure attachment and cognitive outcomes and hence risk is primarily for those children thought to be at a high risk of emotional disturbance (though suboptimal familial care). Conceptions of risk in a social engineering frame are defined in much broader terms of disadvantage; in categories of socioeconomic, health and psychosocial deficiency. These multiple conceptions of risk can be broadly categorised into two, environmental and physical.

⁹ As Bruner (1980) argues ‘welfare nurseries’ were originally aimed at raising the working-class child from the conditions of the slum, dedicated to intellectual, practical and social skills; to save the would-be delinquent from the ravages of his broken home (p.17.). In middle class versions there were no likewise questions.

¹⁰ In fact maternal frame advocates would argue that childcare benefits paid through the tax and benefit system undermine the family unit by encouraging women to seek work, or in some cases inducing poor women to leave their primary caring role. Moreover that it unfairly penalises the ‘stay at home mom’ (insight from interview with Peter Nicholson, 2006.).

In terms of environmental risk, low parental income/socioeconomic occupation, low parental education level, or suboptimal psychosocial home environments (existing contact with social services, mental health problems, young mothers) are considered to be disadvantageous for normal child development (Hertzman and Wiens, 1996: 1088.). In the second, physical conception, high risk status is due to low birth weight, prematurity or malnutrition of the infant (ibid.)¹¹. It is those children and families from the former, environmental (usually socioeconomic) categories (or multiple categories) of profiled risk that are particularly targeted for state intervention and EYEC services. For the most part, middle class families are considered to create optimal environments for children's development and as such there is no case for state intervention for populations outside the 'target' groups. As the social engineering frame takes a broad view of risk groups and potential elements of risk for the individual child (or at least broader than the maternal care frame), these forms of disadvantage require similarly broad intervention programmes. Thus the EYEC services which this frame seeks to promote include a range of parental programmes to support effective parenting, health and nutrition and pre-school programmes for young children.

The rationale for developing intervention services under a social engineering frame differ significantly from other frames by articulating justifications for state intervention and investment in terms of the 'public interest' and macro social gains as opposed to simply benefits for the individual child (Friendly, 2000). By intervening early with EYEC services, proponents of this frame posit that targeted children may show improved socio-cognitive functioning over time; they may have better school results and hence a better ability to

¹¹ It is not necessarily the case that those suffering from low birth weight or prematurity will necessarily come from a mother in low socio-economic class.

compete in the labour market; they may be less likely to have a teenage pregnancy; they may be less prone to delinquency and imprisonment; they may have reduced likelihood of requiring social services and other forms of remedial interventions (Parton and Pugh, 1999: 230; Pugh, 2005: 1.). In this way, by altering the potential life-course trajectory of the targeted children for the better, society will concurrently gain from more educated and responsible citizens, reduced crime, reductions in poverty and all the associated future state costs that dealing with ‘social problems’ entail (such as prison spaces, remedial education programmes, social benefits and other welfare services). Thus this frame explicitly views EYEC services as a means to a greater end; it argues that poverty, social disadvantage and social problems can be ‘engineered’ away through specific targeted interventions.

This frame is strongly associated with research that originates in the USA. In particular, two well known intervention projects, Head Start and The Perry High/Scope Project have formed the ideational and research base of the social engineering frame since their creation in the 1960s. Penn and others argue that these EYEC services operate within a particular paradigm that assumes that ‘within a private childcare market, publically funded pre-school interventions are only appropriate for highly targeted, low income families’ (Penn, 2005: 2.). However, the received wisdom of American individualism and attendant residual forms of welfare preclude a more complex understanding of the nuances of earlier welfare interventions and historical trajectories. It is often easy to be conditioned by America’s current neoliberal paradigm and arch-typical ‘liberal’ welfare regime and hence view past reform efforts from within this paradigm. Yet, the roots of these reforms and, consequently, the development of a ‘social engineering’ frame are formed from a specific historical thread

of American concern for mothers and their children¹². Indeed the early development of (female led) Children's Bureau in 1912 began to investigate and find strong associations between socioeconomic factors and infant and maternal deaths, launching the beginning of a research agenda linking social inequalities and health outcomes (Shonkoff, 2000: 34).

The origins of Project Head Start, which was set up in 1965, can be found, in part, within this earlier investigative tradition linking socioeconomic factors with future outcomes. However, by the 1960s, Federal and Presidential concern about inequalities in infant and maternal health had broadened into a wider concern regarding levels of poverty in affluent America and the environmental and institutional factors that precipitated this poverty. Kuntz describes this attention to poverty and the belief that it could be eliminated as a product of American optimism, fuelled by a sense amongst the public that it was immoral to accept poverty in the midst of a rich country such as America (1998: 5.). Indeed economists of the time made bold declarations; "We can abolish poverty in America in ten years" and "The elimination of poverty is well within the means of Federal, state and local governments" (ibid.).

During the same period of time, ideas about the nature of development were being reassessed and this in turn fuelled academic optimism about the ability to change social structures. Psychologists were becoming increasingly critical of the Progressive Era beliefs that a child's development was predetermined by genetics and research findings were highlighting the importance of early experiences in later development and abilities. Hence intelligence was no longer perceived as fixed but as something that could be improved and built upon (Evangelou and Sylva, 2003: 30.). As such, many researchers started to pay more and more attention to

¹² For an extensive discussion see Skocpol, 1993.

environmental factors and their effects on child outcomes. They sought to explain why children from economically disadvantaged families failed in school more often than children from economically privileged families (Prochner, 2000: 98.). Such a question could lead research down a path of looking at broad macro environmental conditions (broad social structures) and the conditioning effect on individual outcomes. Such investigative endeavours would presumably seek to challenge and alter these broad structures. However, one strand of research and of particular relevance to the development of a social engineering frame would instead start to link environmental factors at the micro level (individual child/family) on the macro societal outcome of poverty and social inequality. Important in this respect was J McVivker Hunt, popularising ideas which linked child development to environmental factors and subsequent poverty (ibid: 99.). He hypothesised that a lack of ‘cultural preparation’ perpetuated cycles of poverty. His research proposed that there are certain periods in a child’s life when specific experiences are necessary for optimal development and that exposure to middle class codes of behaviour, learning styles and expectations were beneficial to child development. In contrast he assumed that poor parents did not have sufficient ability or wherewithal to prepare their children for school. This would ultimately lead to school failure, future unemployment, poverty and a similar ‘culturally deprived’ environment for the subsequent generation (ibid; Halpern, 2000: 364.). The solution to these disadvantageous micro-level environmental conditions for children was a similar micro solution: to create a variety of intervention programmes for children and parents, designed to overcome the influence of culturally and economically impoverished homes (Procher, 2000: 227.). These kinds of ideas became influential in the newly created Office of Economic Opportunity (OEO) which had been tasked with the eradication of poverty in the United States (Kuntz, 1998: 2.).

The OEO had been given the flexibility to create a variety of approaches, including funds to create community action programmes. However fighting poverty in areas which were profiled to be high risk of 'cultural deprivation' (disadvantaged, inner city, African American children, as well as impoverished rural communities) was politically contentious (Halpern, 2000: 364.). The OEO decided that a programme which focused on pre-school children could take advantage of prevailing biases towards protecting children and hence would be attractive to even the most conservative constituencies and circumvent the more contentious issues, especially the issue of targeting specific racial groups.

The OEO tasked experts in the field, including Robert Cooke, Jerome Bruner and Urie Bronfenbrenner to devise a programme to prepare poor children for school; to take care of their nutrition and health problems; to give them books and toys; to give them a *head start* on their education (Kuntz, 1998: 6.). The result was a comprehensive programme including health services, nutrition, community development activities, and parenting (to teach games and activities that enhance cognitive development of children), surrounding a core of preschool education for three and four year olds (Evangelou and Sylva, 2003: 30. The advisors had recommended a small pilot programme for these interventions which could test the effectiveness of the programmes. However politics dictated a much more dramatic gesture and Head Start was launched as an eight-week summer programme for nearly half a million children. The difficulties with stimulating communities into action and the speed required for training teachers working in the pre-school education programmes did present problems of quality and these problems were exacerbated when Head Start was extended to a ten month programme after the first two summer programmes (Halpern, 2000: 364.). Yet

Head Start was extremely popular. The OEO's hunch that a programme for children would be supported by a wide constituency base was entirely correct. Even during particularly austere times for social spending, a poll reported in Newsweek (2 February 1987) showed that 75% of American's would be willing to increase their tax payments by \$50 a year in order to support Head Start Programmes (Browne, 1996: 369.). Latent ideas of child vulnerability that had their roots in earlier reforms may go some way to explaining how Head Start survived when other areas of welfare became highly punitive towards mothers and consequently their children. Nevertheless, the EYEC services that Project Head Start created were specifically intended to break cycles of poverty and as such research investigating the effectiveness of these interventions was a crucial facet of this particular frame of EYEC intervention. Unlike other EYEC frames, justifications for policy intervention are based on broader social benefits and these must be demonstrated.

The initial waves of evaluation and research on the effects of Project Head Start were mixed. This was partly due to the complexity of measuring a programme which had experimented with community-based models of intervention, leading to a highly diverse set of programmes and it was partly due to the uncomplicated methods with which the first waves of investigation chose to model them. A simple input/output model was used in the early studies measuring Head Start's impact. IQ or attainment test scores of pre-school 'graduates' were compared to test scores of control children who had no pre-school experience (Slyva, 1994: 84.). They found that children's early IQ gains from the project quickly deteriorated, leaving Head Start graduates no different from the control group. Evangelou and Sylva argue that these pieces of research that sought to demonstrate effectiveness simply on the basis of quantifiable intelligence measures seriously underestimated the effects of the programme

(2003: 42.). Latterly, more rigorous research conducted by Brookes-Gunn and Schnur (1988) compared the outcomes of 969 disadvantaged children who had experienced three different pre-school environments: Head Start, other pre-school programmes and no pre-school (Sylva, 1994: 86.). The study controlled for Head Start children's lower initial outcomes on social and cognitive functioning (readiness for school) and measured the net gain against children in the other groups. They found that Head Start children made larger gains on social and cognitive functioning than similar peers (and especially large gains were made by black children, above and beyond their white peers). However, the programme could not completely close the gap between those who had more advantageous beginnings (ibid.).

The research and evaluation of Head Start have thus, overall, been considered disappointing. However, the US federal government retains a strong normative attachment to the programme and support its rhetoric of poverty alleviation. In many ways the rhetoric of a functioning poverty alleviation scheme for children (despite limited evidence to its actual efficacy) works as a powerful discourse against broader neo-liberal and neo-conservative ideologies which seek to limit social assistance given to those families (but mainly parents) who have become locked into inter-generational cycles of poverty and 'welfare dependency'.

The Perry Pre-School project run by the High/Scope Educational Research Foundation is the most often cited study by those wishing to advance a social engineering frame for EYEC. The High/Scope Foundation was set up as an independent, non-profit research, development, training and public policy organisation and the 'High/Scope' pre-school curriculum it developed was employed within some Head Start Programmes (Evalengou and Sylva, 2003: 31.). The operation of the High/Scope Perry Pre-school Program was similar to that of other

Head Start programmes due to its focus on high risk children and including parental involvement; however it focused on children aged between three and six only (without parental and early years health services). It can be considered a higher quality programme than many other Head Start programmes by virtue of a sophisticated curriculum based on Piagetian¹³ learning theory and well trained staff (McCain and Mustard, 1999: 46.). Unlike Head Start, High/Scope research and evaluation has produced more powerful empirical evidence in support of a social engineering frame.

The High/Scope programme ran from 1962 through 1967, which consisted of two and a half hour, five days a week, centre based programme for 30 weeks each year, supplemented by 90 minute weekly teacher visits (ibid; Schweinhart and Weikart, 1994: 101.). From the outset, the programme operated as a demonstration project with an evaluation strand. The High/Scope Perry Preschool Study examined the lives of 123 African Americans born into poverty and at high risk of failing in school (Schweinhart, 2003: 2.)¹⁴. At ages 3 and 4, the researchers divided these individuals into a group who received the High/Scope programme (treatment group) and those who received no pre-school programme (control group). Data was collected on both groups annually from ages 3 through 11 and at ages 14, 15, 19, 27 and more recently 39-41 (ibid.). As such, this is a small scale but carefully controlled longitudinal

¹³ This learning theory views children as active learners, with structure emanating from its sequence of 'plan-do-review' approach for children's daily activities. It seeks to encourage the unique differences in children and claims to develop their self confidence by building on what they can do. Children are encouraged to become decision-makers and problem solvers: who can plan, initiate and reflect on their work (Evangelou and Sylva, 2003: 31.).

¹⁴ Here referral for High/Scope was based upon low socio-economic status, low scores for parents' years of schooling, parents occupational levels and rooms per person in their households. They also selected children based upon their IQ (on the Stanford-Binet Intelligence Test) who were in the range of 75-85 (Schweinhart, 2003: 2-3.).

study which has sought to identify the economic and social benefits and the sustained academic gains from a high quality curriculum and intervention programme. In this way, the High/Scope research has sought to demonstrate the dual benefits of EYEC intervention: micro level individual gains and macro level social benefits. The research has compiled comprehensive data on demographic characteristics, test performance throughout childhood and adolescence, school success, crime, socioeconomic success and personal development (ibid: 4.).

The evaluators initially focused on micro level gains at the level of individual IQ scores, charted over time. They found statistically significant effects on IQ during and up to a year after the program, but not after that (Schweinhart, 2005: 16.). In part, tracking originally educationally disadvantaged children with intelligence IQ tests for age specific cohorts, underestimated their net gains (ibid.). Many critics of the time thus wrote off the programme as the effects of High/Scope were simply ‘washed out’ by the time these children entered the public school system. However the outcomes of further longitudinal study of individual life-trajectories, published in 1993, were much more significant and created a renewed excitement around the benefits of a pre-school education or kindergarten (Schweinhart, Barnes and Weikart, 1993). As Sylva argues, the researchers found that in their initial study, simple IQ measures could not capture the overall benefits of EYEC programmes which would appear in ‘life skills’, social and economic outcomes (which revealed themselves much further along in the lifetime trajectory) rather than in tests of formal intelligence (1994: 84.). In their latter study, the evaluators found startling differences in high school graduation, employment levels, social adjustment, community participation and crime between individuals who

attended the programme as pre-schoolers and the control group who remained at home (Sylva and Evans, 1999: 280.).

In order to show the macro social benefits that these EYEC interventions created, Schweinhart, Barnes and Weikart (1993) carried out a cost benefit analysis of the High/Scope programme and found that for every \$1,000 that was invested in the pre-school programme, at least \$7,160 (after adjustment for inflation) had been saved by society (ibid.). This was based upon an average cost of the programme being \$14,716 per participant and yielding \$105,324 of public benefits per participant (Schweinhart, 2003: 5.). Partly, these benefits were calculated on the basis of a decrease in welfare expenditure that has arisen as a result of better long term outcomes for the targeted children, savings of \$3,475 were made in reduced welfare costs, \$7,488 saved in a reduced need for remedial education services and \$10,537 brought in by increased taxes paid by programme participants higher earnings (ibid.). However the lion's share of the benefit or saving to society is the amount that would be notionally saved by victims of crime, if the crimes against them had not been committed (Penn, 2005: 1.). Schweinhart et al, calculate that \$68,584 would be saved by the potential victims of crimes never committed, based upon typical in-court and out-of-court settlements for such crimes and \$15,240 based upon savings in reduced justice system costs (2003: 5.). This as Penn argues is a highly conjectural figure and without an estimate of the costs to the victims of crimes (which may only apply to the US criminal justice system) the long-term economic benefits of the programme appear to be more marginal (2005: 1.). Moreover, there is now a great deal of criticism (from some quarters) based on the ways in which Afro-American groups and other people of colour have been treated in research programmes on child development. They may face particular problems of discrimination in schooling and elsewhere; the high rates of

incarceration of black youths in the USA is a particular feature of the criminal justice system (ibid: 2.).

The issues with High/Scope may generate problems of generalisability and transferability to other national contexts. However, High/Scope research continues to be used as quantitative evidence for a social engineering frame and is cited by those who wish to implement similar programmes outside of the USA. Indeed its findings point towards a conclusion that compensatory, targeted programmes make sustained benefits for both society and the individual. Yet, as Hertzman and Wiens succinctly point out, the data on High/Scope can be interpreted in two ways (1998: 1087.). On one side, emphasis can be given to the remarkable improvements experienced by the pre-school group in relation to the controls, as is generally reported in the press and by government officials. The alternative viewpoint would emphasize the fact that most of the achievements of pre-school group, although impressive when compared with the controls, would not nearly match those of middle class children who had greater opportunities (ibid.). Indeed, despite reduced rates of crime and social service use, some 7% of the programme participants were arrested or detained at least five times and 59% had received social services between 17 and 27 years old (ibid.).

It is clear that underlying operative social structures serve to constrain and limit the effects of short term compensatory EYEC interventions as prescribed by a social engineering frame. In essence, although individual children may get a significant boost from EYEC services (which cast within another frame would become enough to rationalise intervention), they do not manage to 'cure' broader societal ills such as poverty and sustained social disadvantage. As Kagan and Zigler make clear:

‘we cannot simply inoculate children in one year against the ravages of a life of deprivation. Even the champions of early childhood education... have made sobering statements warning us not to expect too much while doing too little. The hard fact is there are no educational miracles for the effects of poverty’ (1987, cited in Browne, 1996: 369.).

However, the social engineering frame side-steps this argument as it promotes EYEC intervention on the basis that it will be an effective means to create broader macro gains which benefit society at large, whether in terms of civil unrest or economic gains to the public purse. This is perhaps the result of a lack of convincing evidence that these programmes can challenge existing social structures creating inequality. Critics of this particular frame for EYEC argue from a position of social justice that the way that compensatory programmes are set up - targeting low income or ‘multi-problem families’ - can give rise to stigma and low expectations (Penn, 2005: 2.). This potential ‘unintended effect’ of targeting may be to undermine the benefits that these programmes may hope to realise; they may be viewed by those ‘chosen’ with hostility and suspicion. A policy promoting universal coverage, in contrast, benefits from being more socially inclusive and non-stigmatising. Indeed it is a difficult rhetorical justification to make intervention and targeting based upon environmental risk without implying that such families are in some ways deficient.

Other critics fear that it may actually enable policy-makers to tinker with the social structure and appear to be dealing with inequalities (or poverty) whilst in reality managing to avoid working on making any radical changes (Browne, 1996: 369.). That if EYEC is predicated

upon being a 'stand alone' vaccinatory programme which cures social inequalities, it simply does not go far enough unless supported by much broader measures to combat social inequality. Indeed, underlying the social engineering frame is a number of broader questions about how to combat social disadvantage. The research which informs this policy frame and, in turn, rationalises intervention for particular individuals and families is profiled through a combination of material *and social* indicators of 'risk'; thus directing discursively policy endeavours towards marginal 'targeted' welfare interventions at the individual, micro level. Both the Head Start and High/Scope projects took up hypothesised risky sections of society (based on the prevailing ideas of Anglo-American developmental psychology and empirical sociology) who were considered to be at disadvantage but who could also be considered to be in some way deficient in their ability to provide their children with an appropriate base for educational and social development. However, the link between this hypothesized 'problem' and 'treatment' can be considered under theorised, indeed, High/Scope operated as an experimental project. Yet the research is set within the parameters of the intervention project and thus does not consider broader structural bases of disadvantage; gains, both public and individual, can only be shown within these policy parameters. Thus questions about the nature of society and how real equality of opportunity and social mobility can be created are side-stepped and with them consideration of broader programmes of social reform.

Overall, the social engineering frame directs attention towards micro solutions to broader social goals. Although there are many difficulties with framing EYEC intervention in such ways and there may be doubts towards its actual efficacy, the power of its discourse of 'targeting' intervention to those 'who need it most' and complementary cost-benefit rationale, lends itself towards ideational circulation through those advocates who wish to make the case

for EYEC intervention, especially as a child poverty strategy. Unlike other frames it does not have anything to say about how EYEC services can be effective for working women, indeed, what is notably absent in High/Scope's cost benefit analysis is a consideration of the potential gains to the economy through parental employment¹⁵. The Head Start and High/Scope projects were initiated at a time when it was assumed that part-time educational provision was sufficient to meet children's needs (and should be introduced from age 3 upwards) and that no extra care need be provided, because mothers commonly stayed at home (Penn, 2005: 1.). This gap is highly criticised by feminists who view a dual role for care and education. It is also criticised by those working on a neuroscience frame (see below) that is not pitched at an early enough time.

1.3 Educative Frame

An educative frame prioritises the educational aspects of EYEC and, in particular, the benefits which come from *universal access* to centre-based group care, such as a nursery or kindergarten. An educative frame is based on a strong discourse of education; that early educational experiences have a long-term and significant impact on subsequent educational achievement and future cognitive gains (Pascal et al., 1998: 51.). As such, as a social right,

¹⁵ This is the case despite Schweinart and Weikart mentioning that a full day (9 hours) programme would, if meeting quality standards, be probably just as effective if not more so than a part time (2 ½ hrs per day) programme (1993: 101.). Cleveland and Krashinsky, based in Canada have calculated the benefits to the public purse of a *universal* system of high quality childcare. They have calculated the monetary benefits of child development and labour force benefits set against the net costs of a full childcare programme (based upon full daycare for 2-5 year olds minus a parental contribution of 20%, scaled to income and minus current government expenditures on childcare). They estimate that whilst this full childcare programme could cost some \$5.2 billion dollars (in 1998), it would return \$10.5 billion dollars, roughly equating to a 2-1 dollar return investment (1998: 74.).

each child should be entitled to an early education experience which is developmentally appropriate and intellectually stimulating, thus creating a solid foundation upon which the future educational career will proceed and hopefully create benefits on throughout life. In many ways, the archetypical ‘educative frame’ would seek to emulate the French *ecoles maternelles*, which are publicly run and funded pre-schools, serving nearly 100% of children aged two and older (Waldfogel, 2002: 534.). These are intended to serve as a form of compensatory education, with the aim of reducing the gap in school readiness between the better-off and the less well off, yet they encourage all children to benefit from such services (ibid.). Indeed, in much the same way that education for older children has been accepted and universalised in Western societies, so too should early childhood be an important time for managed learning. In this way, within an educative frame it is good for all children (across all social and economic classes) to attend some form of centre-based, educationally minded pre-school; ultimately it should be viewed as the first (yet distinct) stage of education. This is opposed to a social engineering frame which seeks to target pre-school education and early years policies based on risk, and tends to justify benefits in terms of the cost benefits of reducing delinquency. Most proponents of early education would prefer not to justify these services merely on the grounds of reduced crime rates; indeed the focus is generally on building children’s cognitive capacities for future educational performance (Browne, 1996: 369; Daniels, 1995: 163.).

The roots of expertise and research that constitute the educative frame can be found in the work of developmental psychologists, who dominated the field of early years research before educationalists and other policy orientated professionals took to researching EYEC from 1980

onwards (BREA, 2003: 6.)¹⁶. As such, the expertise and evidence relating to an educative frame can be considered to be from the same broad academic discipline as the social engineering frame¹⁷. However, rather than investigating early interventions for poor or ‘at risk’ children, researchers working from this frame were keen to investigate the impact and benefits of early education on intellectual and emotional development for all social groups. Indeed the research investigates and profiles different forms of early education temporally as opposed to profiling effects between different social classes. As Jerome Bruner, head of the Oxford Preschool Research Group, argued “the importance of early childhood for intellectual, social and emotional growth of human beings is probably one of the most revolutionary discoveries of modern times” (1980: 9.).

Bruner’s research group, which was set up in 1975, with funding from the Education Research Board of the Social Science Research Committee¹⁸ (and later from the Department of Education and Science), was commissioned during a buoyant period of early years research when it was thought that the UK was about to launch a major expansion of pre-school care. Margaret Thatcher, the then Secretary of State for Education and Science had recently issued a White Paper, *Education: A Framework For Expansion* (1972) which proposed an increase

¹⁶ For a longer history of the British nursery education movement and the earliest pioneers of nursery education see Wadsworth (2002: 55.).

¹⁷ Jerome Bruner held the distinction of being one of the architects of the American Head Start programme, having urged the Johnston Administration, alongside Urie Bronfenbrenner, in 1965, to trial experiments with compensatory early years provision (Mills and Mills, 2002: 4.). Frustrated that the US government had pushed forward with the policy rather than allowing him to conduct an experimental phase, Bruner came to the UK to conduct practice-based research (and for all children rather than those at risk for which “there was ample research available” (Bruner, 1980: xvi.). This worked much more in an educative frame. He has also been particularly critical of subsequent neuroscientific research on early years as a ‘step too far’ (Bruner, 1996.).

¹⁸ Which is now known as the Economic and Social Research Council, ESRC.

in State financed care for the under-fives, in general but for particularly those ‘at risk’ (Bruner, 1980: xii). However the external researchers brought in to carry out the research¹⁹ focused their brief more broadly and sought to measure effects of EYEC for all children, rather than those profiled as at risk. They also assessed different types of EYEC; focusing upon monitored intervention (nursery and their effects); skills, curricula and invisible pedagogies in the peer-group, home and school (ibid: xviii). The Oxfordshire project concluded that childminders, playgroups and [private] day nurseries were inadequate at stimulating children’s intellectual development whereas nursery schools did not have these drawbacks (David, 1981: 123.). Childminding was considered by the study to be ‘an empty time separated from home’ (Bruner, 1980: 180.). Thus in great contrast to a ‘maternal care frame’ which extols the virtue of a ‘domestic setting’, the educative frame turns this on its head; a managed external setting is beneficial to children’s cognitive development alongside the additional emotional benefits of peer group interaction. Nursery schools of sufficient quality, the study found, were much more adept at producing the richest ‘elaborated free play’ and in such circumstances a child would “express his powers to the full” (ibid: 186-187.). An important development to the educative frame was that *quality education* in the early years is particularly important as ‘human childhood, more than any of other species, is marked by extraordinary plasticity’ (ibid: 178.). In this way, early education produces “early attitudes and skills upon which later ones must be built. A fear of failure, developed early, will inhibit the confident use of the mind later. Resistance to adults, early established is not easily shed... the earlier a skill can be mastered without tears and sacrifice of other values, the more will it contribute to a child’s life and form the basis for other skills (ibid: 178-179.).

¹⁹ Who included some important figures in early years: Barbara Tizard, Teresa Smith, Harry Judge and Kathy Sylva (who is still extremely important in current policy debates).

Sylva et al (1980), working as part of the Oxford Research Group, analysed several hundred hours of systematic observations of under-fives in playgroups and nursery schools and found that the structuring aspects of children's experience impacted on cognitive gains²⁰. They found that children at school entry who had nursery education, rather than attending playgroups, were more likely to initiate contacts with teachers that were 'learning orientated' rather than asking for help and used more persistent and independent strategies with school activities (BERA, 2003: 22.).

Subsequent to these early studies, policy orientated educationalists and social workers have participated in providing research and expertise to support an educative frame and to rationalise state investment in EYEC. There was an increasing concern that whilst early research had shown nursery schools and early education programmes to create cognitive gains for pre-school children, these effects 'washed out' soon after school begins (Sylva, 1994: 88.). Thus research attention has increasingly focused upon the more technical aspects of EYEC 'teaching pedagogy'²¹ and 'quality' in early years education and superseding research which focuses on the *effects* of early years care on children in different settings (which often sought to dispel widely held views that early education damages children).

²⁰ Cognitive gains here were measured 'softly': including perseverance on task, complexity of behaviours and language use with adults and peers.

²¹ The issues of appropriate pedagogy will be taken up within the discussion of the 'child-centred frame' outlined below. Whilst many educational theorists based in the UK have made use of the concept 'pedagogy' (borrowing the word from Continental Europe), they have tended to construct this term as 'method of teaching' or as such to forward a specific educative learning strategy that fits a specific curriculum and achieves measurable outcomes. This is not the sense of the term as utilised in a child-centred frame, nor the sense that it is used in other European countries, such as Denmark or Reggio Emilia in Italy.

An important study in this regard, was the *Effective Early Learning Project* (EEL) which was set up in the UK in 1993 and is ongoing. It is a national research and development initiative which aims to improve the quality of early learning in a wide range of education and care settings (Pascal et al, 1998: 52.). There are two parts to the EEL project. Firstly it constructed a conceptual framework to evaluate and improve the effectiveness of early childhood settings (ibid.). Alongside this ‘best practice’ model for early learning, the EEL framework measures contexts of learning such as staffing and the physical and processes of learning such as educative interactions which occur between adults and pupils within a setting Pascal et al (1998: 53.). This conceptual framework has been disseminated to local authorities and practitioners on the ground, intending to give non-graduate EYEC staff “a magic recipe... a thorough understanding of child development and learning theory but in a way that is really accessible, focused on kids and hooked into a qualification system as well” (Pascal, 2006.). Secondly, a small scale longitudinal study has been drawn from a sub sample of the EEL project (118 children in ten settings in the West Midlands). This research contributes to the educative frame as it seeks to test *quality* through different teaching pedagogies, investigating the effects of early learning and child involvement levels in different settings on outcomes, as displayed in children’s level of academic attainment on a Baseline Assessment Scheme at four and Standard Assessment Tasks (SATs) at seven years (Pascal et al., 1998: 54.). Preliminary reporting in 1998 showed that in 50% of cases a linear relationship was found between positive child involvement and the two measures at 4 years and 7 years (BREA, 2003: 40.).

In order to give policy makers more ‘hard’ evidence on the long term educative effects of EYEC²², the DfEE funded a large scale longitudinal study, *Effective Provision of Pre-School Education* (EPPE) on the outcomes of children’s early pre-school experiences in 1996 (Blackmore, 2000: 12)²³. The *Start Right* enquiry (Ball, 1994) had previously reported a concern that whilst there were many small-scale studies suggesting a positive impact for pre-schools, there was a need for larger, longitudinal studies of the impact of pre-school education and care (Sammons et al., 2004: 692.). The EPPE study was thus the first large-scale British study on the effectiveness of different kinds of pre-school provision and the impact of attendance at individual centres on young children’s developmental outcomes (Sylva et al., 2004: 2.). The team studied a range of different types of pre-schools (local authority day nurseries, integrated centres, playgroups, private day nurseries, nursery schools and nursery classes) against a control group of children with no EYEC and sought to establish whether some pre-school centres are more effective than others in promoting children’s cognitive and social/behavioural development (ibid: 5.). The study recruited 3,000 children, age 3 years and above, from a range of social backgrounds (ibid: 2.). Data on a range of child development outcomes (both qualitative and quantitative indicators of cognitive and emotional/behavioural outcomes) were collected at ages 3, 4/5, 6 and 7 years. An important element of the study

²² In this sense, hard findings refer to empirical testing (both quantitative and qualitative) which can be conducted in a longitudinal study, as opposed to the earlier ‘soft’ evidence collected by generally small scale studies, measuring attitudes and dispositions of children.

²³ The research was originally funded by the Conservatives. It’s brief was to test children’s outcomes on the basis of whether they attended nursery schools, nursery classes or playgroups; in essence, to test whether the institution in which EYEC was given made differences to children’s education outcomes and therefore cost-effective to further invest in childcare (Penn, 2006). With the change in government and shifting policy agenda, the programme of research expanded to look at effective practice and pedagogy through twelve intensive case studies of settings where children had positive outcomes (Sylva et al., 2004: i.). It also sought to test the effectiveness of the government’s new integrated centres (combining education and care) and nursery schools (ibid: 4.).

was to take into account the contribution to children's cognitive development of background factors such as birth weight, gender, parental qualifications/occupations and home learning environments so as to ascertain pre-school effects 'net' of child and family factors (ibid: i.). The EPPE researchers wanted to clearly establish the educative benefits for children, regardless of social background. This was achieved by constructing a 'value-added' multilevel analysis, which yielded generalised regressions showing the 'effect sizes' of different pre-school types and duration of attendance on pre-reading, early number concepts and language (Sammons et al., 2004: 702.).

Overall, EPPE evidence found that pre-school experience, compared to none, enhances all round intellectual and cognitive development. Moreover they found that duration of attendance and intellectual development is strongly linked; earlier starts (under age 3) correlating with the highest cognitive development and peer sociability (Sylva et al., 2004: iii.). Full time attendance made no better gains for children than part-time provision. Some negative effects were on social behavioural outcomes were associated with early starts to pre-school (under 2 and 1 years), though the researchers found that the effect was primarily related to local authority day nurseries and private day nurseries²⁴ (ibid: 31.). Hence quality in EYEC settings was particularly important for developing cognitive abilities, with integrated provision and nursery school settings promoting higher intellectual outcomes (ibid: iv.). To this effect the project has also sought to ascertain the characteristics of effective practice (and teaching pedagogy which underpins it) through twelve intensive case studies of settings where children had positive outcomes (Sylva et al., 2004: i.). The EPPE research is ongoing and a

²⁴ And that if those children who were first assessed at three years old went onto a high quality setting between 3-5 years, the anti-social behaviour decreased (Sylva et al., 2004: v.).

latter project (EPPE 3-11, 2003 – 2008) will study the continuing effects of pre-school provision (ibid: 84.). In this way, EPPE evidence is supportive of a universal centre-based pre-school provision for children that is high quality (through high staff qualifications, effective teaching pedagogy), that can create clear and quantifiable ‘value-added’ intellectual benefits and preparations for school entry (‘school readiness’) and ameliorate disparate social background effects. Here EYEC is clearly for educative benefits rather than *childcare*, as provision can be part or full time and it is sceptical of EYEC for children who are very young.

In Canada, recent research has utilised the National Longitudinal Survey of Children and Youth (NLSCY), which began sampling in 1994. Hertzman and Kohen (1998) have examined patterns of non parental care used by a sample of pre-schoolers (4 and 5 yr olds) from the first cycle of the NLSCY²⁵. They found that these children had significantly higher scores on a standardised measure of receptive vocabulary²⁶ than children who were at home with a childminder or mother (Lipps and Yiptong-Avila, 1999: 52.). In their follow up study, Kohen et al., (2002) found that more formal childcare had the greatest effect on vocabulary scores for children in lower income groups but that pre-school programmes had positive effects for a broad range of Canadian children over and above family socio-demographic characteristics (Kohen, Lipps and Hertzman, 2006: 3.). Another similar study, by Lipps and Yiptong-Avila (1999), using cycles 1 and 2 of the NLSCY compared children aged 2 to 3

²⁵ National Longitudinal Survey of Children and Youth. This was the only data set that was available at the time (which in its first phase was geared to measuring child poverty, demographics, health and family patterns and relationships.). In 1999 a pilot modification to the NLSCY – the Understanding the Early Years (UEY) community component was initiated in North York and subsequently extended out to all new birth cohorts. It added objective direct assessments of child development, information on community characteristics and resources and questions on non-parental care in the early years (Connor and Brink, 1999b: 7.).

²⁶ The Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test – Revised (PPVT-R).

years, who went to some form of non-parental care²⁷ and those who were looked after by their parents (p.54.). They found that regardless of education of the child's mother or the income, external care had positive effects on the performance of children in kindergarten. 40% of the children who were in non-parental care were judged by their teachers as being near the top of their kindergarten class in communication skills, versus 25% who were in parental care. 38% of children in non-parental care were rated as near top of the class in learning skills versus 24% who were in parental care (ibid.).

To summarise, an educative frame prioritises the educative aspects of EYEC and, in terms of policy, advocates for quality and universal services for children (hence requiring significant government funding) in order to ensure that children achieve their fullest educational capacities. To this effect EYEC services should be primarily for the educational benefit of the child and not necessarily a service for working parents. This research that informs this frame is ambivalent about whether EYEC should be part time, school hours or full time (EPPE research supports part-time provision, as full time care does not make increases in educational benefits.). Indeed, where an educative frame supports centre-based, structured EYEC, part-time or half-day provision is more often advocated so as to not 'overload' children.

The research which has underpinned an educative frame has moved with general long term trends in mainstream educative policy research towards more quantitative and empirically verifiable measures of education. Moreover, the educative frame reflects a particularly Anglo-Saxon (pre-primary) way of thinking about education, which stresses the importance of

²⁷ Including early childhood programmes, daycare centre or received care from a paid worker such as a nanny. The study did not make a distinction between levels of quality of EYEC.

acquiring specific subject-based knowledge and specific skills and the necessity of getting children ‘in and on early’. Indeed, early childhood practitioners and those engaged in research now operate within a professional context in which measurement, ‘baseline assessment’ and ‘value added’ strategies are dominant features (Pascal et al., 1998: 58.). Such strategies require highly qualified staff to implement effective ‘early learning’ curriculums and hence may improve the status and pay of those working in a professional EYEC field. However this narrowing of educative discourse to that which can be expressed in terms of standardised, measurable skills and outcomes, may actually impede development of effective pedagogical approaches. There is a danger that the relationship between educator and child becomes an instrumental one, based predominantly on children attaining certain targets (Bennett, 2004: 16.). Moreover, the stress on academic goals and outcomes can be criticised as an invasion of childhood (Bennett, cited in, Kamerman, 2000: 31.). Indeed a tension exists in educative framed research that seeks to demonstrate ‘convincing’ outcomes and justifications to policy makers, whilst protecting more effective early learning pedagogies that allow for experimental and spontaneous learning and emotional development.

1.4 Equal Opportunities Frame

An equal opportunities frame is strongly linked (especially in discursive terms) with the care aspects of EYEC policy. However, unlike a maternal care frame which frames ‘care’ in traditional terms (that mothers want to and should provide the majority of care) an equal opportunities frame seeks to socialise the care of societies young children; caring should not be the sole preserve of mothers and caring work needs to be reconciled with men and more broadly with society. Underlying these two different discursive frames are particular

normative statements about gender. A maternal frame (outlined above) implicitly favours a 'difference' perspective between the genders and a tendency to favour private solutions (through a suspicion of group early years care). An equal opportunities frame does the very opposite. It looks for public solutions for care work and seeks to challenge traditional social norms regarding caring as a specifically female role, ideally to equalise assumptions about care work between the genders. EYEC services, moreover, are considered to be a positive and enriching service for women and children, rather than being seen as a 'necessary evil' only to be contemplated when the mother cannot cope (Moss, 1988: 6.).

From the perspective of an equal opportunities frame, universal EYEC services are important policies which can promote equal opportunities and can thus aid gender equality. This frame is closely associated with the work of feminists, childcare advocates²⁸ and trade union activists, who have long advocated for high quality, universal childcare services, ideally funded by the state. In particular, feminist social policy research has continuously argued that the arrangement of care of young children²⁹ stratifies the position and opportunities of women and men in a society (Kroger, 1999: 31.). In this way, the action (or inaction) resulting from welfare state policies addressing the organisation of care is decisive for gender relations (ibid.).

²⁸ Alternatively called 'daycare' advocates. There has been much internal debate within the Canadian advocacy community over the usage of the word 'daycare' versus 'childcare'. The term 'daycare' was seen as not sensitive to the needs of families working irregular hours, so 'childcare' has been adopted increasingly (Rothman and Kass, 1999: 266.). For example the Ontario Coalition for Better Daycare (OCBDC) changed its name to Ontario Coalition for Better Child Care (OCBCC).

²⁹ And also the care of disabled and older people (Kroger, 1999: 31.).

The rationale for developing EYEC services as understood from an equal opportunities frame is principally about creating meaningful, genuine choices for individuals with children and in so doing alter structures of gender inequality. Universal EYEC services, it is argued, can help to create more of a level playing field for women and men (and for individuals with or without children) to compete in the labour market, embark on education and training or to more broadly to contribute to society; in essence creating a system of childcare services which provide actors with genuine choices over their participation in society. Many advocates working with an equal opportunities frame would stress that in order to create such genuine choices, EYEC services must ensure high quality (though not necessarily in the strictly *educative* or developmental sense, as would be in an educative frame) and good experiences for the child. Whilst poor quality, patchy services may allow for female labour market attachment it will not create opportunities for mothers to make positive choices; for many using such services will be a choice of last resort. Moreover it may actually dissuade mothers from taking up an offer of good employment if there is not good childcare available. In this way, the needs of mothers and children over quality services are considered to be one and the same.

Within an equal opportunities frame it is thus argued that EYEC policy should ensure high quality, publicly funded (or subsidised) universal services for the care of young children, covering both extended and unusual hours and being available in a variety of locations to aid access. In so doing these services will create: better structures of opportunity for actors making choices about labour market attachment; alter domestic power relations between men and women; aid individuals to form autonomous households; and potentially alter (or at least

challenge) broader gendered social norms regarding care work and employment discrimination arising from such norms³⁰.

The anchoring ideas and expertise which informs an equal opportunities frame for EYEC have their roots in the feminist movement, as briefly mentioned above. However, it must be stated that not all feminists would agree with the perspective of an equal opportunities frame for EYEC, indeed, issues of childcare and motherhood have divided feminists as much as united them. Within feminism there are deep seated disagreements over whether women and mothers should be valued for their gender difference against those who wish to actively deconstruct gender identities and transcend them. Feminists who fall into the latter group have been generally associated with the push for EYEC services under an equal opportunities frame. Since the 1960s these 'equality' feminists (part of the 'second-wave' of feminism) optimistically envisioned a world in which child rearing had become completely socialised, making traditional motherhood a thing of the past (Michel, 2002: 333.). They argue that the traditional domestic bargain does not work to the advantage of all women. Indeed, they consider most women's lives to be shaped by an enforced dependency by virtue of caring conventions; that they were neither prepared, nor expected or given the opportunity to be autonomous adults (Coote, Harman and Hewitt, 1990: 34.). The assumption and anticipation of motherhood (with its subsequent caring role) has stifled the expectations of women to become the main breadwinner or participate in extended education and training. Moreover, in

³⁰ Indeed it must be noted at this juncture that many feminists would argue that simply the provision of adequate childcare services would create true "equality of opportunity" nor resolve gendered inequality of domestic caring roles and divisions of labour. Indeed patriarchal structures run much deeper than a surface-level lack of childcare services. To achieve gender equality simply at a household level a much more complex rebalancing of unpaid work between market, state, men and women would be required (see Lewis and Giullari, 2005:78.).

so doing, women have often earned less than men and hence it ‘makes sense’ for women take time out of the labour market, lowering their earning potential (alongside other benefits such as pensions) and further reinforcing their dependency on men (ibid.). In this way, ideas of maternal care and broader gender identities needed to be actively challenged³¹. They argue that this is a possibility since such identities are social constructions arising from patriarchal social structures rather than essential biologically determined divisions and as such they could be problematised, overcome and eventually transcended. This agenda of gender identity deconstruction is to be pursued at the individual and societal/state level. At the individual level early second-wave feminists used consciousness-raising groups to develop critiques of how girls were raised and outlined the inequalities of girl’s (and subsequently a mother’s) socialisation (Martin, 2005: 458.). Through these endeavours, these feminists wanted to open up possibilities for women and to remove limitations on their lives; encouraging expanded roles for both women and mothers.

At the societal level and of great importance to the second wave feminist agenda was whether the state institutions upheld, or helped to transcend, traditional gender identities. As Orloff states, ‘Gender differentiation exists on the systemic level (eg through creating different programs for labour market and family failures) and on the individual level (eg through processes of making claims on the state where men have typically made claims as individuals and workers, women often as dependents and family members)’ (1996: 72.). Within the Beveridge system, the duty of unpaid care was recognised by benefits allocated to wives and children as dependents of men and through men (Pascal, 1997: 106.). Benefits on this basis

³¹ Although maternal ideas were actively reclaimed by latter feminists who took a ‘difference’ or cultural perspective. See for example Koven and Michel, 1993.

entrenched dependency and inequality in citizenship itself: women depended for their rights on a man and a marriage (ibid.). As the traditional 'male breadwinner' family started to become less entrenched as the standard family form, the need for state social policies to reconcile work and care became pressing. Crucially, access to paid work and to the services that facilitate employment for caregivers are critical gender dimensions of welfare regime variability and reflect core gendered interests of women. Paid work is a principal avenue by which women have sought both to enhance their independence from husbands and fathers in families (thereby undermining the bread-winner housewife family form) and to claim full status as independent citizens (ibid.). However, the terms on which women seek to enter the labour force are not equal. Access to the full range of jobs in a society and genuine equality of opportunity requires access to 'internal labour markets' (Moss, 1988: 29.). These 'internal labour markets' provide the possibility of promotion; of good pay, conditions; and a relatively high level of security. Internal labour markets provide the basis of power within the labour market. Jobs which fall outside these markets are often part of a secondary labour market, where pay, conditions prospects for training and advancement and security are poor (ibid.). However jobs within internal labour markets often come with implicit or explicit commitments to working hours or continuing employment after a business has invested in training an individual. It is argued by feminists and childcare advocates that employer discrimination is rife within the labour market where the state policy treats care as a private matter. In such circumstances, only those who have a significant income from their job can afford to utilise private care (whether it be a nursery or nanny). While women are disadvantaged because of the unequal distribution of childcare and the lack of employment to adapt to family responsibilities of employees; the labour market cannot said to be free (Moss, 1988: 256.).

Estimates have been made of the material cost to women of caring for children. Heather Joshi has analysed the way in which the anticipation of motherhood (by women themselves and others) affects their earning power, so that they earn less than men even if they don't have children (Coote, Harmen and Hewitt, 1990: 35.). She counts the total loss for a mother of two children, compared with women without children, at 46 per cent of lifetime earnings and 'more than twentyfold her annual salary when she dropped out' (1992, in Pascal, 1997: 98.). If a women's earning are compared with men's there is a similar loss of lifetime earnings resulting from being female. Joshi states "if this general disadvantage, to which all women are exposed, it is itself an indirect outcome of the social expectations about the female caring role, the costs of caring are compounded – in this case, roughly doubled" (ibid.).

Many Feminists have looked to Scandinavia as a place where significant investments have been made in EYEC policies in order to socialise care and promote better gender equality. Here, during the 1970s, processes of profound societal change contributed to the rethinking of the state-parent relationship (Leira, 2006: 30.). In Denmark and Sweden³² the trade union movement and feminist academics who questioned traditional gender roles began to lobby forcefully for public day care (Bergman, 2004: 222.). The rhetoric employed by equality feminists concerned every adult individual's right to be economically independent or self-

³² Finland and Norway had different trajectories of development in respect of childcare and early years policies. In these countries, women were integrated into the paid work without childcare services. Historically, traditional gender arrangements have received more support in Norway than elsewhere in the Nordic region. It was not until the 1980s until that childcare provision expanded, however the country still lags behind in terms of full-time nursery places (Bergman, 2004: 221.). Finland was also the first of the Nordic welfare states to introduce a cash grants in the place of childcare services (where parents could choose between childcare *or* a cash grant) (Leira 2006: 41.).

supporting and every child's pedagogical and social right to be cared for in a high-quality, well-equipped day care institution (ibid: 223.). During this time, individual needs for care were redefined to form a basis for social rights. Framed within the vocabulary of social rights, to which was added a profound political commitment to gender equality, parenthood policies promoted defamilisation as well as refamilisation of childcare; moving mothers out of the home and a returning home of fathers (Leira, 2006: 31.). In particular, EYEC, once defined as a primary responsibility of parents, was redesigned as an interest common to, or a joint venture between, parents and the welfare state. Moreover, state funding of early childhood and care would facilitate the employment of mothers as well as fathers encouraging a despecialisation of parental practices (ibid.). Initially, these competing discourses on the position of women and who should care for children triggered a heated debate, not least among women (Borchorst, 2006: 106.). During this time also it was widely debated whether childcare facilities were beneficial to children or not and experts providing evidence to settle the matter generated ambiguous conclusions (ibid.). However, by the 1970s, working mothers had become the hegemonic norm and ideas of the necessity of maternal care had lost ground; such material changes to the social structure perhaps facilitated the ascendancy of the feminist discourse on gender equality³³. Moreover, the Nordic states, accepting that the economy would need both mother's and father's labour as part of a full employment strategy, developed municipal child-care services which have become an integral part of the social welfare system (Bergman, 2004: 225.). Universal coverage was the aim: services were to be

³³ Feminists in Scandinavia were skilful in framing EYEC services both in terms of gender equality and secondly as a social right of the child. EYEC was advocated as educationally and socially advantageous for young children; state-sponsoring of childcare was also presented as being in the best interests of the child and as a means of overcoming social inequalities among children (Leira, 2006: 35.). Indeed, whilst Scandinavia is often considered as a model of feminist success and indeed fits well discursively with an equal opportunities frame, the particular history and policy trajectory of Nordic social policy is more complex.

made available at affordable costs for all children whose parents wanted parents it and not just for the children of employed people and students (Leira, 2006: 37.). This point is important for those Anglo-Saxon advocates who wish to emulate a Scandinavian system - social contributions should be viewed as widely as possible and through accepting this broad notion of contribution, childcare and early years policies should not be exclusively tied to parental employment. Indeed, by creating EYEC systems, the aim is simply not to activate (or commodify) labour on whatever terms necessary³⁴. From an equal opportunities frame, it is inevitable that women, in the large part, will wish or need to work but state funded childcare services alter the terms on which they carry out such employment.

The supply of EYEC services in Scandinavia grew from 1970s and 1980s. By the early 2000s, save for Norway, the universal right to childcare and early years services was complete. The success of the various feminist movements in the Nordic states in promoting EYEC policies as a broader programme of equal opportunities, creating an institutionalised set of universal social rights to EYEC, has provided feminists and childcare advocates in Anglo-Saxon countries with a blueprint for social rights and policy programme which could be adapted to the national context.

In Canada, there has been a particularly strong tradition of feminist activism in respect of childcare and EYEC services, much of which has utilised (and indeed contributed to) an equal opportunities frame. However, as elsewhere, the relationship between the women's

³⁴ Such a policy would, in all probability, be ineffective as data from Huber and Stephen's comparative analysis of 16 countries from the early 1960s attests to. They found that rather than childcare services being prior to big expansions in female labour force participation, it is a growing female labour force participation which, through both direct and indirect processes, has led to social service expansion (2000: 325.).

movement and the childcare movement is complex and contradictory, in part because of the intractable divisions over the meaning and the politics of motherhood (Prentice, 2001: 20.). Labour movements and childcare advocates have worked together to challenge entrenched gender norms and argue for a 'socialised form of childcare that would transform relations between men and women and thereby counter patriarchal power structures in society' (White, 1999: 100.). In this way, much of the Canadian childcare debate has centred on auspice³⁵ and structural definitions of quality. High quality under this frame is discursively linked with working conditions of the childcare staff (invariably due to the high representation of labour groups), which dovetails neatly with a broader feminist agenda to ensure better employment rights and equality in areas where women had traditionally been disproportionately represented. Moreover and certainly linked to this framing of high quality was auspice; to ensure state support for not-for-profit childcare centres only. For the CDCAA and its supporters, high quality through good wages and provision could only be assured through either state-run (usually municipal) or not-for profit childcare centres, preferably where parents should also have a role in the delivery of childcare programmes (Rothman and Kass, 1999: 264.). High quality could certainly not be assured by the commercial sector³⁶ who, as businesses, were required to make a profit from care from what the advocates viewed in

³⁵ Many of the groups during the 1970s were advocating for 'free universal and quality state daycare'. However, by the end of the decade, advocacy groups adjusted their demands to gain more mainstream support. For example Action Daycare (latterly Ontario Coalition for Better Childcare, OCBCC) moved to lobbying for 'universally accessible, publically funded, not-for-profit and non-compulsory daycare system' (ibid.). In general there was a shift in arguing for purely state-run EYEC services to either state run *or* state funded not-for-profit EYEC (as long as these both ensured quality). This adjustment to the advocacy's lobbying demands made a subtle, yet important discursive shift emphasising the importance of auspice of EYEC within the advocacy movement

³⁶ The commercial sector is represented by the Canadian Child Daycare Federation (CCDCF) which included in its ranks both professional childhood early educators and commercial childcare providers (Jenson, Mahon, Philips, 2003: 142.).

contrast as a social service, akin to education or healthcare (Jenson, Mahon and Philips, 2003: 142.). Advocacy groups have argued for ‘childcare centres which would operate for full, short or long days or extended or unusual hours, located in residential communities, at or near workplaces, in schools or in the other locations, available on a full-time or part-time basis’ (Friendly et al., 1991: 5.).

Feminist childcare advocates in the UK have echoed the concerns of the Canadian advocacy movement that stress in the absence of a public funded and regulated childcare women’s choices and opportunities remain limited. In particular, the Daycare Trust was set up in 1986 with an agenda to create a national, publicly funded childcare system in the UK. The founder, Helen Penn, states the motivating reason to begin a campaign on childcare was that

“women were having such a very bad deal, particularly working women and one of the ideas behind the Daycare Trust was to try and change the conceptualisation of services so that it was useful for working women” (Penn, 2007).

The Daycare Trust served as a counter-voice to those advocates working from an educative frame, arguing that state services should merely provide for care on a part time basis as this would not cater for women’s needs for childcare (ibid.). Indeed as David states “enabling mothers to work part-time and more flexibly would therefore serve to reinforce patriarchal relations and the sexual division of labour in childcare” (1981: 123.). David is equally concerned that state inaction allows childminding and other private solutions to develop in the policy vacuum an absence of public provision creates and that such policies serve to maintain a cheap and flexible labour force. Indeed as she states:

“Private minding has great advantages for governments and employers.... the service expands and contracts with little cost except to minders and mothers. It is in short, ideally suited to the needs of disadvantaged and weak sectors of the labour force, indeed, childminders themselves form part of that sector” (ibid: 124.).

In this way, well funded public provision is necessary to guard against a stratification occurring between affluent working women and poor (and often migrant) childcare workers (Lister, 2002: 134.).

As can be seen, the equality opportunities frame thus directs attention discursively to the gendered nature of state action or inaction over EYEC services. As Lewis argues by way of summary, ‘policies that stop at making it simply possible for women to go out to work do nothing either to promote a more equal gendered division of the care work that remains to be done, or to promote the valuing and recognition of that work at the household and societal levels’ (2002: 347.). EYEC services can both cover the hours necessary to allow women to make working choices and to be of a level of quality that provides children with positive experiences also. Such a preoccupation with creating both gender equality and high quality childcare services for children are criticised from those working from alternate frames, who suggest that such policies informed by such arguments would “put the interests of women before children” (Moss, 1998: 252.). However, this standpoint is misinformed and suggests that mothers would intentionally place their interests above those of their children. Moreover, the equal opportunity definition of ‘quality’ which is inextricably linked to the proper working conditions and labour rights of childcare workers, links both the interests of children

and women into one. For many who advocate from within this frame, a privately run EYEC system will invariably either squeeze profit from either low levels of quality or from low paid staff. Unlike other frames which have ‘the weight of science or evidence’ behind them, the equal opportunities frame relies on normative statements about social policy, social knowledge derived from feminism and cross-national comparisons of EYEC systems. Some question the power of a feminist discourse from which an equal opportunities frame draws to challenge the status quo; indeed the equal opportunities frame seeks to alter dominant norms about gender roles (White, 1999: 108). Although it is an extremely depressing thought to consider feminist arguments as a hindrance to gaining government and societal support for childcare, the complex politics of motherhood within the UK and Canada creates potential conflict where two opposing counter-discourses (of female difference or equality) rally against one another. Other frames which focus discursively on ‘children’s rights’ as its rationale for policy action or make less explicitly contentious policy objectives (such as education) may draw less negative external press and be less likely to insight potential counter-groups to object to the frames normative and policy position. However where such policies advocate for small gains in specific areas, mobilisation and reinforcing social feedback loops will also be more difficult to come by. The equal opportunities frame’s rationale for EYEC is ambitious and wide in scope and hence (as the Scandinavian case shows) once institutionalised increases the potential female political mobilisation to maintain and develop such rights. Moreover it does seem a little pre-emptive and self-defeating to reject a frame on the basis that it is too ambitious.

1.5 Neuroscience Frame

The neuroscience frame for explaining and rationalising state EYEC interventions is the newest of the EYEC frames, based upon emerging field of evidence and expertise, indeed, much of the research which this frame draws its ideas from, can (even today) considered to be in its infancy. Moreover, in many academic and advocating quarters it is considered a controversial field of evidence and expertise, especially with regard to attempts to fuse the fields of (existing) ‘early years education’ research and neuroscientific evidence. As with the social engineering frame, such expertise and evidence has mainly emerged from America. However, rather than being based upon the work of educationalists and developmental psychologists (as the educative frame and social engineering frame respectively) the neuroscience frame is based upon evidence in the field of neuroscience, psychoneuroimmunology, psychoneuroendocrinology and some epidemiology³⁷. In America, according to an OECD report, the years 1990 to 2000 were declared the “Decade of the Brain” (2002: 70.). Certainly during this time there was an explosion of knowledge from neuroscience about the brain; the relationship between development in the early years and learning behaviour, and health risks in the latter stages of the life cycle (McCain and Mustard, 1999: 26.). Such ideas have come to prominence in discussions on EYEC policy and have created a powerful policy rationalisation for EYEC which seeks to enhance overall child development.

³⁷ Neuroscience being the study of the structure and function of the nervous system and in particular in this case the study of the brain. Psychoneuroimmunology being a branch of science concerned with the relationships between the mind and emotions, the nervous and immune system and hence susceptibility to disease. Psychoneuroendocrinology being a branch of science concerned with the relationship between the nervous system and the endocrine system.

To both its detractors and its advocates, the neuroscience frame of EYEC is a powerful fusion of ‘hard science’ regarding the brain and discourses of health and education. In particular neuroscience seeks to define in biological terms the importance of the ‘early years’ and the necessity of EYEC and child development/stimulation policies during this time period. Where other research programmes in the fields of developmental psychology have made tentative causal links between the environment and subsequent cognitive development and there has been a nearly 50 year link between cognitive psychology and education research, neuroscientific ideas spell this link out in the most definite of terms (even if in reality many of the actual causal links made between neuroscience *evidence* and education *policy* are tenuous). For the most part, EYEC advocates forwarding a neuroscience frame claim to have the most powerful evidence for the importance of the early years and the necessity of investing in early years education alongside all the other satellite child/foetal development programmes (such as maternal health, nutrition and broader maternal stress alleviation programmes). As Clyde Hertzman of the Canadian Institute for Advanced Research (CIAR) states:

“the rediscovery in the policy world, of the role of early childhood as a lifelong determinant of health, well being and competence [...] has occurred because issues of early childhood development began to be expressed in a credible vocabulary for modern society – the vocabulary of science” (2000, 16, cited in Saint-Martin, 2007: 291.).

It is argued in short, that investments in early stimulation services are vital if a society is to realise each individual's full potential. Moreover, it has aroused broad social, political and media interest. As Bruer, notes "brain science fascinates teachers and educators, just as it fascinates all of us" (1997: 4.). In part also, it is a visual frame, where the latest technologies have allowed neuroscientists to take pictures of the human brain and study its activity at different stages of development (McCain and Mustard, 1999: 26.). Such visual evidence adds potential media usability and political interest. In short, many in and outside of the early years field have been dazzled.

The main thrust of the neuroscience frame for EYEC is to stress the importance of the early years for subsequent educational abilities, emotional strength and future health. In many ways, neuroscientific evidence enhances or augments existing rationalisations for EYEC (indeed for many this 'new science' is an irrelevance to existing policy rationalisations for EYEC). However this frame casts attention towards the importance of the earliest period of life (even before birth) for subsequent developmental outcomes and hence directs attention to social policy interventions at a much earlier time period than all of the other frames. It is still subject of conjecture between particular neuroscientists, but where "early childhood" has generally been defined as the period from birth to age 8, some neuroscientists have narrowed the window of importance for EYEC interventions from birth to age 3 (ECS, 1996: 12.). Others relax and extend this period, from birth to 5 (Friendly, 2000). As has been shown above, the educative frame advocates for most EYEC interventions to begin around age 2/3; as have the experimental educational interventions of the social engineering frame. The neuroscientific frame's evidence (as will be outlined below) radically shifts policy attention towards the earliest years. As such many advocates seeking political attention argue for a

significant overhaul of both education systems and the proportion of state expenditure devoted to different stages of education³⁸. As McCain and Mustard state

“the evidence is clear that good early child development programs that involve parents or other primary caregivers of young children and can vastly improve outcomes for children’s behaviour, learning and health in later life. The earlier in a child’s life these programs begin the better. These programs can benefit children and families from all socioeconomic groups in society” (1999: 7.).

As can be seen from the above policy rationalisation the evidence and expertise which forms the foundations of the neuroscience frame supports and recommends (except for few exceptions) *universal* provision of this early ‘education and care’. Indeed, in ways similar to the educative frame, EYEC policies are important for the development of all children, albeit at an earlier window for intervention. Much of the research, is based upon primate studies on the brain (and specific developmental periods which are crucial to normal future development) which are then extrapolated and compared to hypothesised human brain potential. This research is therefore not necessarily premised upon a sociological analysis of early education benefits for certain socioeconomic groups considered to be at risk (as with the social engineering frame). Risk, under the neuroscientific frame is rather about the analysis of ‘critical’ (or at least sensitive) time periods in any one child’s life. For some advocates this leads to the conclusion that during this critical period, interventions are necessary and indeed if children during this period miss out on vital stimulating experiences, learning opportunities

³⁸ For instance in figures quoted from OECD, the UK spent only 2% of the education budget on children in their early years, whereas Sweden spent closer to 17% of their education budget (Margaret Hodge, 2nd June 1997, in *Hansard*, Vol.295,column,70.).

can be lost forever (Bruer, 1996: 4.). In this way, all mothers and children can benefit and may well require enrichment programmes, specific nutritional advice and health. Moreover, where risk is profiled by a neuroscience frame for social policy intervention, it is primarily a physically defined conception of risk (as opposed to the socially defined risk of a social engineering frame). Here, high risk status is due to low birth weight, prematurity or malnutrition in the infant (Hertzman and Weins, 1996: 1089.). It can also be based upon high levels of stress during maternity and/or depression on foetal development (Dawson, Hessel and Frey, 1994). These profiles of risk are once again not socioeconomically specific; individuals presenting as a risk may come from any socio-economic group. Hence those advocating utilising a neuroscience frame suggest that social policy interventions in EYEC must be universal, so as to capture those who may need it most. Secondly, as every child will have specific periods where enrichment programmes may aid development – all children should benefit from and indeed require such programmes to reach their full developmental potential.

The neuroscientific research and evidence that forms a neuroscience frame, as mentioned briefly above, started to be taken up by some early years advocates during the early 1990s. For decades prior to the 1990s, it was known that the brain development of many animals, particularly within the visual cortex was highly dependent upon environmental stimulation (Mills and Mills, 2000: 3b.). This branch of research was developed during the early 1990s to look at the comparisons between animal studies and the possible links to human development in the early years. The merging of the neuroscience story with the development story, it is argued, has increased the understanding of how fundamental the first years of a child's life are in laying the base for the future (McCain and Mustard, 1999: 25.). In particular, this research

focused upon the linkage between the way the brain develops and the neurological and biological pathways that affect learning, behaviour and health throughout life. The work of Goldman-Rakic on synaptogenesis is important here. This research has sought to link experimental data on the brain development and the synaptogenesis (the process of synaptic proliferation creating brain density) of rhesus monkeys to humans (Blackmore, 2000: 2.). This work found that in rhesus monkeys, synaptic density (the number of synapses per unit of brain tissue) reaches maximal levels two to four months after birth and appears to do so simultaneously in all areas of the cerebral cortex (Bruer, 1996: 5.). Then significant pruning begins (where frequently used connections are strengthened and infrequently used connections are eliminated) (Blackmore, 2000: 2.). For rhesus monkeys, synaptic densities gradually decline to adult levels around three years of age, the time of sexual maturity for that species (ibid.). This experimental data on monkeys and the idea of an important early stage for brain development is extrapolated to the human case. Before this research was carried out, it was widely believed that the architecture of the brain was pretty well set at birth by the individual's genetic characteristics inherited from the parents (McCain and Mustard, 1999: 26.). But Goldman-Rakic's work changes this perception, for the monkeys at least, development of the brain is an ongoing process initiated pre-natally and peaking at the point of sexual maturity. In, the case of humans, considerable brain development takes place also before birth. At the beginning of the embryonic period (two weeks after conception) the neural tube, which will form the brain and spinal cord, is formed. Most of a human's lifetime supply of brain cells is produced between the fourth and seventh months of gestation. A full term baby comes into the world with billions of neurons which have to form quadrillions of connections to function effectively (McCain and Mustard, 1999: 27.). In response to stimuli from the environment through the sense organs (for example, eyes, ears, nose, tongue, skin,

muscle joints) the neurons in the relevant part of the brain form connections (synapses) that allow the brain to recognise the signals of the neural pathway connected to the sensory organs (ibid.). From infancy and continuing into later childhood, there is a dramatic increase in the number of connections (synapses) between the brain cells (neurons) (Blackmore, 2000: 2.). Just as with the monkeys, synaptic proliferation occurs before synaptic elimination takes over. The period of time between synaptic proliferation and elimination is a matter of great conjecture amongst neuro-scientists. Claims are made in educational literature working with a neuroscience frame (and following the evidence of Goldman-Rakic) that the ‘critical period’ for humans may be as early as from birth to age three years and that the areas of the cerebral cortex (the part of the brain responsible for sensing, moving and thinking) develops at the same time³⁹ (ECS, 1996: 12.). Other neuroscientists dispute the period of time in which synaptogenesis and synaptic elimination occurs⁴⁰, suggesting that some areas of the brain have different rates of maturation and that some of this may continue until individuals reach 18 years of age. Most would agree, however that significant activity occurs in the years before pre-school.

That neuroscientists purport to be able to pin-point when a baby’s brain sets neural pathways for life (within the above early years range) is a bold claim, yet it is argued that such information will be useful to educators, parents and policymakers. Indeed, for it is in this time (to be most effective) that children should be exposed to all sorts of learning experiences

³⁹ It is argued so, because the brain’s structures are linked by a complex network of interconnections and thus each structure is a separate module that functions in parallel with the others (Goldman-Rakic, in ECS, 1996: 12.).

⁴⁰ For instance in the human visual cortex there is a rapid increase in the number of synaptic connections at around two or three months of age which reaches a peak at eight to ten months and stabilisation at age 10 (Blackmore, 2000: 3.).

to aid development (ECS, 1996). In sum, a child's development, according to this evidence requires positive interaction, modelling and support from the outside by parents and other care givers (OECD, 2006: 191.). This discourse of neuroscience rationalises EYEC intervention at this vital time; for Goldman-Rakic if this window of opportunity for learning experiences is lost, it is lost forever. As she argues:

“from the time a child enters first grade, through high school, college and beyond, there is little change in the number of synapses. There is considerable debate within the field about whether learning creates new synapses – I haven't seen convincing evidence for that” (ECS, 1996: 12.).

Moreover, it is argued, that this evidence must have some implications for how a society approaches education. Whether this process is indeed a 'critical period' as Goldman-Rakic's work suggests, or should be defined as a 'sensitive period' is debated amongst neuroscientists and early years advocates as this has significant implications for those individuals who have missed (or been deprived of) enriching experiences in the early years. Indeed, often within the literature, 'critical periods' and 'sensitive periods' are used interchangeably, yet these different wordings have different implications for policy and the ethical treatment of individuals.

From the neuroscience side, the arguments for critical periods are supported by the work of David Hubel and Torsten Wiesel, (1965). Here they studied how visual deprivation affects the development of visual systems in cats (Bruer, 1997: 7.). To test developmental 'plasticity' the researchers covered one eye of new-born kittens. After about three months,

the eye was uncovered and the researchers studied the connections between the eye and the brain. They found that this early visual deprivation led to a severe deterioration of neuronal connections in the visual areas of the brain and to virtual blindness (Blackmore, 2000: 3.). This outcome did not occur when adult kittens were subjected to the same ordeal. Hence this research suggested evidence of a specific ‘critical period’ for development which, if tampered with at this time, resulted in permanent damage. However, this work has been subject to much criticism, especially in terms of its applicability for humans⁴¹. This area of neuroscience is difficult to prove in the case of humans as for obvious reasons such experiments cannot be carried out in the same way and physical studies of brain development must come from autopsy. The counter thesis to critical periods is that ‘sensitive periods’ exist for human beings in the early years. This implies that whilst the time frame for a particular biological marker is important it is not absolutely necessary in the achievement of a particular skill; mastery can occur but with more difficulty (OECD, 2002: 75.). It is beyond the scope of this chapter to fully identify and elaborate each counter piece of evidence which refutes the case of ‘critical periods’ in human development. However, one good example of synaptic elaboration at latter dates is that provided by Maguire et al., (2000) on London taxi drivers⁴². Evidence that taxi drivers have a larger hippocampus (the area of the brain responsible for spatial memory) than non-taxi drivers, suggests that changes and growth in the brain can occur later and according to use (Blackmore, 2000: 5.). Because of these controversies, in a debate which is still ongoing in neuroscience, many scientists in the field stress that as our

⁴¹ And even cats. For instance Chow and Stewart (1972) tested this hypothesis more closely with kittens. Their work revealed the potential for kittens to recover their function in the visual cortex. For the full discussion see Bruer, 1997: 7-8.

⁴² For a full elaboration of evidence relating to sensitive periods see Blackmore (2000). Also the evidence on neuroscience is fully explained in the OECD report, *Understanding the Brain: Towards a New Learning Science* (2002).

current understandings are at best an approximate measure, 'sensitive periods' should be used to describe the process of early child development and synapogenesis. As mentioned above, stressing 'sensitive periods' over 'critical periods' has ethical implications for individuals and is particularly relevant to how policy is conceived. Indeed, framing the importance of early child education policy through a notion of 'sensitive' periods for subsequent development is much less controversial than stating that such time periods are 'critical', as the latter implies that children who miss out on vital developmental milestones and enriching experiences do not have any hope of catching up later on and hence remedial education and other opportunities for a second chance will be useless. As Hertzman and Weins state 'who wants to embrace a model which says that if they aren't ok by age three, scrap them!' (1996: 1087.). Whilst a policy advocate (often non-specialists in neuroscience) may want to make a bold claim that intervention and investment is 'critical', the material manifestation of this discourse in policy has significant implications for how remedial policy is conceived in political quarters. It is however, an issue which is somewhat overlooked by policy advocates who utilise the neuroscience frame for political action, but does highlight the importance of subtle differences in particular discourses for framing policy interventions.

If policy advocates who work within a neuroscience frame may disagree over specific time scales for intervention and how much these will determine future outcomes, all agree that during the 'sensitive' pre-school period, all children can benefit from rich, stimulating learning experiences. Neuroscience research shows that complex skill development is essentially 'experience dependent' and requires structured experience through social interaction (OECD, 2006: 191.). This is especially the case with language and vocabulary development. Even before birth, the infant's brain is constantly seeking to make sense of

what it experiences, including the use of language. For instance, babies everywhere can distinguish the sounds of one language from another. But after about six months, babies begin to develop "magnets" that attract them to the sounds of their own language. They lose their early ability to discern fine differences in sounds in foreign languages. A baby who listens to Swedish, with its sixteen vowel sounds will have different language magnets than a baby who hears English, with eight or nine, or Japanese with only five vowel sounds (ECS, 1996: 13.). Those 'perceptual maps' developed in infancy may account for distinctive national accents and the difficulty in learning and distinguishing related sounds in other languages as we grow older (ibid., 1996: 4.). The perceptual map accounts for the difficulty experienced by adults acquiring a new language. Many Japanese students of English find differentiation between R and L sounds particularly difficult, even after many years of speaking English (ibid.). Conversely, deprivation of language during the crucial early years will adversely affect a child's development. It is clear that exposure to the words of the language is essential to the acquisition of vocabulary; feral children who lack all interaction with human adults do not acquire language (Huttenlocher et al., 1991: 237.). This example is extreme but this idea of perceptual maps and the importance of exposure to a rich language for development creates an impetus to create high quality EYEC services which will maximise a child's potential⁴³. Indeed, by two years old, the average child acquires nine hundred words and a rudimentary syntax (ibid: 236.). Some children develop more

⁴³ In a conversation I had with a professor who had spent some time in Sweden and had sent her child to a municipal nursery there, her child learnt to count in twelve different languages. EYEC and effective pedagogy thus have the potential to open up a child's capacity for language.

however⁴⁴, and this language development which occurs between fourteen and twenty-six months, strongly predicts subsequent educational attainment. Thus developmental neurobiology in conjunction with knowledge of language development purports to explain why Head Start programmes fail to result in sustained improvements in children's IQs. Head Start begins too late in children's critical learning period to rewire their brains (Bruer, 1997: 5.). Hence the development of 'Early Head Start' programmes in the United States. It also reinforces the necessity of early learning and effective pedagogy within early years education and care services.

Another contribution that neuroscience brings to the understanding of the importance of the early years for subsequent development and justificatory evidence for the importance of investing early is that EYEC can have a protective effect on health. Hertzman and Wiens (1996) suggest that education in the first two decades of life can protect against dementia at the end of life. In this way, education can have a protective effect on the health of individuals. They cite a review a study by Katzman (1993) in which the association of low education with an increased prevalence of clinically diagnosed dementia was found to be a consistent finding in studies carried out in six different settings around the world (cited in Hertzman and Weins, 1996: 1085.). The hypothesis is that those with more education have greater brain reserve in the form of an increased density of neural interconnections (increased synaptic density) in the areas of the brain associated with learning and memory (ibid.). The increased reserve would have the effect of postponing the time at which declines in brain reserve associated with ageing would reach a threshold for dementia.

⁴⁴ An American study by Heart and Risely (1995) found that by the time they were four, children of professional parents had, on average heard 45 million adult words. Children with parents on welfare had only heard 13 million (Mills and Mills, 2000.).

Moreover, it has been suggested by those in the field of psychoneuroendocrinology that the neurological system can ‘talk to’ the immune and endocrine systems which in turn can affect resistance to disease and the function of vital organs (Hertzman and Weins, 1996: 1084.). This process is active during the pre-natal stage and thus directs attention to policies which care for the mother. Indeed, maternal stress and depression it is suggested can create unfavourable intrauterine environments, including biochemical changes directly related to mother’s depression as well as factors such as nutrition, sleep patterns and stress levels (Dawson, Hessel and Frey, 1994: 776.). Studies on the offspring of rhesus monkey mothers exposed to repeated unpredictable stress during pregnancy have been found to exhibit lower birth weights, impaired neuromotor development, attention deficits, delayed cognitive development and less exploratory behaviour (Schneider, 1992a, 1992b, 1992c, cited in Dawson, Hessel and Fray, 1994: 776.). In humans it is therefore highly possible that early experiences in the womb and during the early postnatal period may have enduring effects on the biochemistry and microarchitecture of the developing brain (ibid.). In particular, low birth weight and length of gestation may link to conditions such as coronary heart disease, high blood pressure, non-insulin dependent diabetes, reduced immune function and obesity in later stages of the life cycle (Mustard, 2000: 4.). Barker’s work⁴⁵ on this subject revealed that there can be intrauterine programming of the CRH-HPA axis⁴⁶ which affects memory, cognition, behaviour and metabolic pathways, the immune system and cardiovascular system throughout

⁴⁵ See 1992, 1997, 1998, explained in full in Mustard, 2000: 2-5

⁴⁶ This system basically regulates hormones in the HPA – hypothalamus (pituitary/adrenal gland) system and regulates the release of corticotrophin (CRH). The ‘sterols’ released into the blood following stimulation of the CRH-HPA pathway affect all body systems including the brain. Elevated blood sterol levels of a long duration are not good. It may have effects on behaviour, loss of cognitive function and memory loss with aging (see Mustard, 1999: 3.)

life (ibid.). In less scientific terms, Barker reasons that poor maternal nutrition and/or stress, not only restricts the normal growth of a foetus, but also programmes the baby to develop common chronic diseases in later life. Moreover, it is suggested, that this nutrition-induced stress could 'hard-wire' the brain of the foetus so that it operates in permanent 'fight or flight' mode, thereby triggering high blood pressure (Schmidt, 1999.). Armed with such evidence and expertise, policy advocates working from a neuroscience perspective thus suggest that in order to fully realise any effective EYEC system, policy interventions must begin at the very earliest stage of life and significant attention should be paid to the needs of mothers. Indeed this evidence leads some policy advocates to pry open social questions and advocate for a broad agenda of social reform. It is certainly a difficult policy agenda to fully realise; many overlaying problems, conditions and broader operative structures can lead to the condition of maternal stress and whilst intuitively it would suggest that mothers should certainly not be exposed to poverty and unsuitable home environments, in practice most advocates have focused on effective nutrition programmes for mothers.

As has been shown, the neuroscientific frame is extensive in policy scope and has some overlaps with other frames in policy terms. In many ways the neuroscientific frame can be distinguished from others by heavily stressing the necessity of enhancing child (health and cognitive) development through scientifically informed intervention. As such, the policy implications of a neuroscience frame for EYEC are also extremely broad where they have been concretised in policy documents. As can be seen from a policy document from Clyde Hertzman, director of the prestigious Canadian inter-disciplinary team set up to investigate neuroscience evidence. Here the policy agenda included a wide scope of action. As he states:

“Because the developing brain is an “environmental organ” improving child development depends upon improving the environments where children grow up, live and learn. It is not simply a question of fulfilling specific service mandates to narrowly-defined client populations... [it is to] bring an environmental perspective to agencies that have traditionally understood their role to be exclusively the provision of one-to-one client services... primary prevention of speech and language pathology means working to create a richer ‘language environment’ in the community. Family literacy programs are an example of such an approach” (2004: 10.).

Alongside a wide scope of action it is true to say that those advocating EYEC services from a neuroscience frame have tended to be somewhat vague on actual education policy and pedagogy over polemic. The Education Commission of the States, concludes that this is not necessarily a bad thing:

“early child education is one area in which educators could take advantage of what neuroscience needs. Many early childhood educators have known intuitively that children’s capacities develop in tandem and the findings of neuroscience seem to support education researcher’s pleas for integrated, contextual instruction in mathematics, reading, spelling, science and so on” (1996: 9.).

However, critics of the neuroscientific frame such as Bruer (1997) suggest that in fact, studies in neuroscience cannot yet form the foundation for principles about how to improve formal education and early years pedagogy. He suggests that educational researchers probably have

a better handle on effective child development and learning strategies at present and that these advocates are:

“Trying to build a bridge too far... Currently we do not know enough about brain development and neural function to link that understanding directly in any meaningful way to instruction and educational practice” (1997: 4.).

Similarly a recent OCED report, calls such endeavours to encourage early years teachers to adopt newly developed ‘brain-based teaching strategies’, the institutionalisation of a ‘neuromythology’ (2002: 69.). Many advocates working from an educative frame would suggest that on the basis of their research and evidence, attempting to create a formal curriculum or pedagogical approach for children under eighteen months of age (indeed, even under age three), would in fact be harmful to children, if indeed it is at all possible. This is especially the case where neuroscientific insights into early years educative practice are still being developed. Christine Pascal, Director of the Centre for Research in Early Childhood at Worcester suggested that there is a danger that policy makers may interpret the neuroscience discourse and frame for intervention as “rationalising a very formal prescriptive curriculum for very young children” (Pascal, 2006.). Hence, whilst neuroscientific insights into education may prove fruitful in the future, it would be unwise to experiment upon a generation of children.

Some advocates argue that the neuroscientific discourse of ‘early enriching environments’ as a necessity for young children may unduly worry parents. Parents experience significant guilt proceeding from their supposed capacity to influence their children’s early experiences and

one has only to think of the pregnant mother playing cds of Mozart in an effort to stimulate her unborn child, to realise how much pressure this may place on them to ‘realise a child’s full educational and developmental potential’. As the OECD comments, ‘parents are an important ‘market’ for neuromythologies’ (2002: 69.). Moreover, some elements of the neuroscience discourse which stress ‘sensitive’ or ‘critical’ periods for children’s development, may also put undue pressure on children to achieve developmental milestones at appropriate times. As this ‘science of development’ is being fully elaborated, questions can be asked about how those children (for whatever reason – for instance those who are perhaps disabled) who do not achieve certain developmental goals will be treated by policy makers. The more stress that is put on the importance of stages to development, the less emphasis is placed on the ability of remedial social policy. Most advocates forwarding a neuroscience frame have tended to not either elaborate upon this issue (whilst it is often taken up by those forwarding an educative frame and a child-centred frame) or rather focused upon broad rationalisations for investments in the early years. Certainly, as a polemic against a lack of state intervention and investment in this area, is where the neuroscience frame works most effectively.

1.6 Child-centred Frame

The ‘child-centred frame’ self-consciously sets itself apart from all other frames for EYEC. In many ways it can be considered to be an anti-scientific and anti-evidence frame. It is formed, in part, from a general dissatisfaction with mainstream research practices and a rejection of other EYEC frames which base their discursive (policy) rationales upon claims to ‘objective’, ‘scientific’ truths justified through empirical and often quantitative supporting

evidence. Indeed, it is argued that within Anglo-Saxon countries, such frames and evidence purport to have an authority over other forms of knowledge and expertise and thus excludes other forms of knowledge and other potential discourses of the early years.

Many of the EYEC frames which have been covered thus far (with the exception of the equal opportunities frame) have been founded upon research that works within an (implicit and explicit) positivist epistemology and research methodology. Much of this evidence and expertise is drawn from research fields from where this is to be expected: developmental psychology, neuroscience, epidemiology and other ‘sciences’ all self-consciously reflect this particular epistemological paradigm⁴⁷. Moreover, within these alternate frames, the benefits of EYEC programmes are often justified with reference to quantitative and empirical measures of ‘child development’ and other ‘measured’ outcomes which have subsequently informed implicitly ‘objective and universally applicable’ discourses of quality for EYEC programmes. It is thus implicitly claimed that the various ‘EYEC policy models’ which each frame describes, can be applicable across different national contexts and within different cultural settings. Indeed, as has been discussed in the proceeding sections, much of the evidence upon which various frames draw their policy rationales has arisen from America. Despite some obvious methodological problems with the potential transferability of EYEC policy (especially the specific national demonstration projects) from one national context to the next, this evidence has been developed and reproduced through seemingly coherent policy frames in such a way as to facilitate ideational circulation. This is particularly evident within

⁴⁷ Schweinhart (architect of High/Scope research which contributed to the formation of the social engineering frame) makes this explicit. He states “The scientific approach adopted in the High/Scope Perry Pre-school study is the logical application of the principle that similar experiences have similar effects on human development – what might be called the principle of external validity or generalizability” (2005: 14.).

the neuroscience frame; brain research seeks to identify the common and universal structures of development in humans. It is thus presented as applicable in all contexts and for every individual; indeed the *raison d'être* of the neuroscience frame is convince governments of the necessity to invest in the very early years.

For those who work in other research paradigms, especially those EYEC experts who work from within a postmodern epistemological position, the central concepts which have informed dominant research practice and define policy within alternate EYEC frames such as 'quality', 'best practice' and 'child development' are neither neutral nor universal constructs which can be applied in all circumstances and cultural contexts. Indeed, the particular discourses of quality and child development (found especially within the social engineering, educative and neuroscience frames) which have acquired a hegemonic status in the Anglo-Saxon EYEC field are considered to be strongly modernist, positivistic in approach and committed to the importance of generating objective forms of knowledge (Dahlberg et al., 1999: 101.). By exposing such knowledge as operating within a certain paradigm, a child-centred frame asserts that these discourses in fact embody a 'grand narrative' of early childhood and development. For these researchers, the early childhood field is increasingly dominated by this one particularly strong narrative: an Anglo-American narrative spoken in the English language, located in a liberal political and economic context, instrumental in rationality, universalist in ethics and technical in its approach (Moss, 2001: 13.). Moreover within this narrative it is suggested that technocratic 'child development knowledge has been so foundational to the field of early childhood education that erasing it would seem to leave us in a mindless limbo' (Dahlberg et al, 1999: 100.). Researchers, activists and academics from a child-centred frame argue that this narrative can be actively challenged and moreover that the

discourses of ‘child development’, ‘quality’ and ‘childhood’ actually differ according to particular cultural and temporal spaces (especially outside the Anglo-Saxon world). They are concepts constituted through a particular discourse, of a particular ‘regime of truth’, which can (and indeed should be) essentially contested and open to deconstruction.

In this way, a central thrust of the child-centred frame is to closely interrogate the central unifying concept of ‘early childhood’ which binds all EYEC frames and to which (discursive and policy) action is directed. Indeed, as Carlina Rinaldi, from the influential Reggio Emilia project in Italy, states ‘childhood does not exist, we create it as a society, as public subject. It is a social, political and historical construction’ (cited, in Moss, 2001: 3.). Questioning what are usually treated as neutral concepts and problematising the notion of childhood is thus an important endeavour for these academics and activists. Working from an explicitly postmodern position⁴⁸, these actors have sought to create a counter-discourse of ‘early childhood’ and ‘the child’ which challenges (what they view as) the positivist orientation of the mainstream. Much of the impetus for this action, aside from questioning the external validity and generalisability of knowledge generated from a positivist epistemological position, is that some of the other EYEC policy frames can have real and detrimental effects on children; that children are subjects and objects of intervention and, as such, not are considered as citizens in their own right. Many of these researchers are concerned that a ‘schoolification’ of the early childhood years is taking place through an overt focus on readiness for school and learning standards in Anglo-Saxon countries (OECD, 2006: 63.). Potentially, other frames for EYEC, if transposed to the political/state arena and concretised

⁴⁸ And often drawing upon insights from the post-structuralism of Foucault, see Darlberg et al, (1999). Especially pp.28-35.

through policy, will make this situation worse for the lives of children. Moreover, inaction by the state in this regard will also leave the early experiences of children to the whims of the market, which fills the vacuum that an absence of social policy creates. Indeed many researchers working from this child-centred frame worry that modern childhood is increasingly becoming institutionalised (Moss, 2001: 4.).

Through carrying out a project of deconstructing ‘normalising’ concepts contained within the early childhood mainstream field these researchers have also embarked upon a project of reconstruction which aims to create an alternative frame for EYEC intervention and loosely conceived ideas of potential early childhood institutions which are explicitly *child-centred*. Indeed, from the viewpoint of the child-centred frame, ‘childhood’ is and should be viewed as a phase of life with intrinsic value (Neuman, 2000: 8.). In this way, as Friendly (2000) states:

“It presumes that children have a value here and now, not simply for what they might become, whether they might become better students or better citizens or less inclined to criminal behaviour. One way to think about this is, as has been said, ‘children are people, not merely adults in training’ ”

Broadly speaking, this reconstructive project seeks to describe an alternative vision for early childhood institutions as potential ‘children’s spaces’. In this way, a child-centred frame explicitly rejects conventional notions of EYEC institutions as ‘services’, instead these ‘spaces’ are conceived as ‘physical and discursive spaces which provide opportunities for many projects involving children and adults, the consequences of which may be unknown’ (Moss, 2001: 5.). As such, these EYEC institutions explicitly ‘[turn] away from the

modernist idea of organic unity and encourages multiple languages, confrontation, ambiguity and ambivalence' (ibid.). This is a radical conception of EYEC institutions and turns the idea of rationalising EYEC on the basis that it will achieve a particular broader goal (whether this is: increasing a child's potential cognitive development, saving future social expenditures, allowing female labour market participation etc) on its head. Instead, EYEC institutions should be primarily for the benefit of child 'in the here and now' without reference to some broader aim or specific external set of goals. Indeed, the vision of EYEC institutions as 'spaces' draws attention to the idea that children and adults should determine their own goals in EYEC centres and engage in a variety of activities and projects without necessarily working towards a pre-determined set of criteria, nor to achieve a particular outcome. This explicitly views the child as a 'co-constructor of knowledge, understanding and identity, who at an early age is viewed as rich in potential, and strong, powerful and competent' (Neuman, 2000: 7.). In so doing, the child-centred frame rejects the idea that a child is an empty vessel which needs to be filled with knowledge or should be *the subject of* other policy aims. Instead this frame aims to build a vision for EYEC centres which are more participatory and inclusive with children at the centre of collaborative projects. As such, EYEC centres should be:

“sites for many projects. These projects can be of many kinds: social economic cultural, political aesthetic, ethical. What the projects are will be determined by adults and children, and once again are contestable – there is nothing inevitable about what happens in children's spaces” (Moss, 2001: 5.).

Peter Moss, Professor of Early Childhood Provision, at the influential Thomas Coram Research Unit (based at the Institute of Education, University of London), arguably the principal proponent of the ‘child-centred frame’ (especially throughout the Anglo-Saxon world) sums up the central rationale for a child-centred frame for EYEC institutions to the point. As he states:

“For me early years education institutions are at their best, like schools at their best, places of possibilities” (Moss, 2007).

In this way, through constructing an idea of EYEC institutions as a site of possibilities and having a relatively wide scope for potential activity, the child-centred frame seeks to broaden the notion of what EYEC services can conceivably achieve, the aims of these institutions and what place they can occupy in society.

Overall, in a sense, a child-centred frame asserts that EYEC institutions should be viewed as forums or focal points located in civil society: for children and constructed by the needs of children (Friendly and Lero, 2002: 8.). Moreover, these institutions should be ‘community institutions in their own right’. For Darlberg et al., such institutions can become ‘the primary means for fostering the visibility, inclusion and active participation of the young child in civil society (1999: 7.).

Speaking more prescriptively, such institutions should be seen as a resource for local children, families and communities. Their task is to provide a range of provisions, activities based

upon a holistic approach to children and in response to the needs of local children and families. As an OCED report asserts:

“The curriculum for [EYEC] should be: broad and holistic; more process-related and co-constructive; defined by the vital interests and needs of the children, families and community; and more in tune with socio-cultural contexts. This supports the development of flexible frameworks that give freedom for adaptation, experimentation and cultural inputs” (2001: 116.).

Moreover following the idea of participation, this model would seek to include all children; there should not be separate services for children with disabilities, for families at risk or for children with employed parents (Moss, 1997: 15.). Of course, following the principles of diversity and local knowledge which is so integral to the post-modern understanding (and so opposed to the universalising force of scientific ideas as within social engineering, educative and neuroscientific frames), proposed EYEC centres would seek to retain as much local diversity as possible whilst maintaining a common ethos which would ensure a consistent, equitable and integrated approach (ibid.).

The overall aims and ambitions of the child-centred frame for EYEC can thus be considered ambitious and, as has been shown, reflects a distinctive conception of children as experts within their own lives. This is very much opposed to children being the subject of experts and expertise. As can be seen from the proceeding discussion, the overall ethos or vision for EYEC centres that a child-centred frame constructs is quite loosely conceived, in many places, the child-centred frame asserts that EYEC centres should treat children both

holistically (implying attention to many facets of a child's development) and yet also respond to the specific needs of each child as an individual (implying an autonomy from specific or external learning objectives or set criteria for activities). As such the child centred frame offers a general sketch of how EYEC centres or institutions might actually operate. In part, this is to maintain sensitivity to different national and cultural situations. Indeed, for a country like Canada, with significant First Nations populations, such considerations are especially important where previously such communities have been subject to western 'best practice' considered to be in the best interests of subjected children (Darlberg et al., 1999: 169.). In part also, it is a central aim of the child-centred frame to reject a technical or standardised approach which can be classified and replicated irrespective of context (ibid: 122.).

However, it is true to say that this frame draws much of its inspiration from the work of municipal pre-schools, in the Reggio Emilia region of Italy⁴⁹. The Reggio Emilia pre-school centres have been famed not only for their democratic vision of society, but also for the level and complexity of learning generated by children in these centres (OECD, 2006: 139.). In keeping with the idea of children as experts of their own learning, projects are freely chosen with teachers and children experience aspects of the surrounding world (including their experience of life in the city) and explore their interconnectedness (ibid.). Their thinking and

⁴⁹ This frame also similarly draws inspiration from the Danish pedagogical approach which is in many ways very similar to Reggio Emilia. Danish pedagogues are educated to work across a wide range of occupations and settings and are the main workers in early childhood settings, school age childcare, youth work, residential care for children and young people and services for adults with severe disabilities. As such they are very far removed from the English idea of 'teacher' and pedagogues maintain a distinct and strong professional identity (see Moss, 2004). Moreover the Danish eschew didactic education models, preferring a notion of competence rather than acquisition of knowledge (OECD, 2006: 139.).

learning are expressed through many modes of expression (their words, projects, paintings, photos and constructions) reflecting a central place given to freedom of inquiry, culture and imagination (ibid.). In many ways, the child-centred frame seeks to emulate (or at least draw inspiration from) the principles and pedagogical approach to working with young children as happens within Reggio pre-schools. As Darlberg et al, state ‘the Reggio approach shares much with post-modern understandings and concepts such as ‘construction’, ‘co-construction’ and ‘reconstruction’.’ (1999: 121.). Moreover, it shares ‘a pedagogical practice located in a profound understanding of young children in relation to the world and a philosophical perspective which in many respects seems to us postmodern’ (1999: 122.).

The Reggio Emilia approach or practice to working with children in their early years has been developed since the end of the Second World War within the commune (local authority) of Reggio and has built up an extensive network of early childhood institutions for children from 0 to 6 and at the same time working to develop a pedagogical theory and practice, which has been the subject of much international interest (Darlberg et al., 1999: 13.). The nurseries began as self-organised day care collectives, whose funding was taken over and extended by the local authority (Penn, 1999). As such they are local collaborations between parents, practitioners and children of Reggio but, in particular, the work of Loris Malaguzzi, a psychologist working in the area and the first head of the early childhood service was an important developer of the pedagogical practice (or method) which has become synonymous with Reggio.

Here it is useful to specify what pedagogical practice entails, especially outside of an Anglo-Saxon context. Pedagogy is a long established tradition in Continental Europe, but to the

English ear, especially outside certain specialist circles it is largely unused or where it is, misused (Moss and Petrie, 2002: 138.). Often in British educational theory, the term is used in the sense of ‘the science, methods of teaching/learning and especially the methods for teaching subjects’⁵⁰. In Continental European usage, pedagogy denotes a much broader intellectual domain which encompasses the study of education and a variety of forms of human enquiry and endeavour related to it (ibid.). In this way, the field of pedagogy is much wider than that of the English word, teacher, indeed it refers to the whole domain of social responsibility for children, their well-being, learning and competence. Pedagogues work across a wide range of occupations. The general approach is relational and holistic: ‘the pedagogue sets out to address the whole child, the child with a body mind, emotions, creativity, history and social identity’ (Moss, 2004: 1.). For Malaguzzi specifically, the Reggio pedagogical practice aimed to:

“make a place of research, learning, revisiting, reconsideration and reflection... in our approach we proceed by making plans, considering options, making cognitive reflections and symbolic representations and refining communications skills... what is most appreciated all along is the shared sense of accomplishment as individuals and as a group (1993, cited in Penn, 1999)

Malaguzzi developed the idea that through an active reciprocal exchange, pedagogues can strengthen learners how to learn. The central acts of adults, therefore is to activate, especially indirectly, the meaning-making competencies of children as a basis of all learning. As a

⁵⁰ Often this is the way that pedagogy is referred to within the educative frame. For example Siraj-Blatchford and Sylva (2002) in their recent DfES-sponsored study of effective pedagogy in the early years, explain the term as ‘both teaching and the provision of instructive learning environments and routines’ (cited in BERA, 2003: 7.).

pedagogical councillor in Reggio describes ‘the job of the pre-school is to let the children know that they are the ones who give shape to things and are not just destined to submit the things’ (Filippini, 1997: 40.). As such Reggio Emilia schools do not follow an external curriculum. The content of the work is said to be ‘emergent’, that is, chosen by the children and is negotiated with their pedagogue, who’s main task is to support the children in realising and reflecting on their project (OECD, 2006: 149.). Moreover, Malaguzzi, aimed to create a diverse learning experience which would include what he termed ‘many languages’; ‘expressive, symbolic, cognitive, logical, imaginative, ethical, metaphorical and rational’. All which would be given equal weight or consideration (Filippini, 1997: 42.). The environment of the pre-school would also be given attention, Malaguzzi colourfully describing it as a ‘kind of aquarium which reflects the ideas, ethics, attitudes and culture of the people who live in it’ (ibid.).

As can be seen from the proceeding discussion, the child-centred frame directs discursive and policy attention towards to the child. Perhaps more than any other frame, it has a well-developed sense of the child as citizen with rights and as an active and valuable participant in civil society. Those who advocate the child-centred EYEC frame would not wish to assert (owing to their epistemological concerns) that their particular frame offers ‘the best’ vision for a EYEC institutions, nor that Reggio institutions in Italy should provide a specific blueprint for policy outside of that particular context. Advocates for a child-centred EYEC policy, such as Peter Moss, would rather appeal to the notion of creating a broad programme of action for EYEC intervention which would recognise children as having rights, autonomy and a need to follow their own specific developmental path. In many ways, the child-centred frame seeks to radically alter social policy orientations to children. In so doing it offers a

powerful critique of alternative frames which seek to enact EYEC policies *upon* children, especially where there are specific measurable and external goals in mind. It also offers a critique of the dominant expert discourses which produce research about EYEC. As Peter Moss mentioned in interview:

“it is not that any of these [policy frames] are not rationales but there is a tendency to layer everything on one thing.... you get a homogenised approach which actually produces extraordinarily dull research, you get the same old ‘if you spend one dollar you get so many back’. I think on the one hand it completely underplays the potential of the institutions in early childhood and on the other hand sets them with impossible expectations” (2007.).

Within a child-centred frame, that children’s holistic well being can be enhanced through EYEC institutions should be the single motivating aim of any policy. For these advocates there is no need to justify policy with appeals to quantitative ‘educative gains’ or ‘investment returns’. Such policies have a tendency to treat individuals instrumentally. Instead these advocates seek to justify policy purely through rights; to borrow from the Reggio city motto: ‘Investment in children is a fundamental cultural and social investment’ (Ontario, 2006: 91.).

The programme of reform which the child-centred frame rationalises would require significant investment on the part of the state. As much as 40% of the municipal budget in Reggio Emilia is allocated to education (ibid.). Creating universal community hubs which could be accessed equitably by all would require significant new (capital) investment, alongside a broad training programme which would allow EYEC practitioners to develop

appropriate pedagogical approaches. Moreover, many child-centred advocates seek to follow the Nordic example of a late start to formal education and as such raise the entry age of children into school. Whilst there are many good reasons for such investments and a restructuring of the Anglo-Saxon education system, it is certainly the most radical frame when compared to the traditional lack of state invention in EYEC within Canada and the UK. Indeed, the child-centred frame seeks to fundamentally challenge existing divisions between the state and family responsibilities and create a new specific area of social policy constructed through a discourse of children's social rights. Where a particular state has traditionally considered issues of childcare as a private, family matter, as has been the case within the UK and Canada, a child-centred policy frame challenges the fundamental values of welfare state action. In so doing it potentially seeks to challenge underlying cultural values about the position of children in civil society. In this sense, therefore the child-centred frame asks governments to move the furthest; to establish a distinct new area of social policy. This is in contrast to alternative frames which target interventions to specific clienteles (as in the social engineering frame) and others which seek to build upon existing social policy areas such as education (the educative frame and to some extent the neuroscience frame). As such, academics, activists and policy entrepreneurs who seek to forward this frame in the political arena have, without doubt, the biggest task ahead of them. It is possibly for such reasons that these child-centred advocates encompass a small, yet highly committed set of agents working at the margins of the international early years field.

As such, as has been shown, these six frames make very distinctive claims about EYEC; what mode the state should play in terms of reconciling care, education/development and wellbeing. Whilst some are expansive and potentially reconcilable, such as the child-centred

and equal opportunities frames, others narrow the focus of EYEC to particular elements which may preclude an integrated system or confine EYEC institutions to those at risk.

2. CHAPTER TWO: EYEC IN ENGLAND: THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

“Children are 20 per cent of our population but 100 per cent of our future” (Gordon Brown, Chancellor of the Exchequer, HC, 2002)

Since 1997, over the course of three terms of government, New Labour have invested over £25 billion in EYEC policies; opening some 3,000 ‘Children’s Centres’ across the country; provided free universal part time early years education for three and four years olds (alongside pilots for 2 year olds) which by 2010 will entitle each child to 15 hours per week for 38 weeks of the year; created an extended schools programme within half of all primary schools, providing Ofsted registered childcare from 8am to 6pm, 48 weeks of the year; created a statutory duty for all local authorities to provide sufficient childcare places for children under three; and provided child tax credits which aim to cover up to 80 per cent of childcare costs (HC, 2009; DCFS, 2009; HC 2007; HM Treasury, 2007: 113; HC, 2007a; HC, 2007b.). In short, New Labour have embarked upon an unprecedented social policy expansion into the EYEC field and committed significant state funding towards this endeavour. Over time, EYEC has come to be generally considered a flagship policy of New Labour’s tenure. As Gordon Brown has made clear ‘we are committed to a national childcare strategy for the first time in this country, and we are committed to funding it properly’ (HC, 2001a.). Similarly, the first Minister for Children, Young People and Families, Margaret Hodge, has asserted that the government would ‘put children at the heart of everything we do’ (Hodge, 2003 cited in Williams and Roseneil, 2004).

Such a high level of recent commitment to EYEC policy is thrown into relief by the historic paucity of funding for early years and childcare policy in England. Until relatively recently, EYEC has notably lacked significant policy attention. While many other European countries have developed extensive, sometimes near universal EYEC systems, England has been a policy laggard (OECD, 2001: 180.). For the most part, save for those children who have been deemed ‘at risk of neglect’, the state has intervened little in this area. The education and care of children have been considered very much the private responsibility of their parents (Millar and Ridge, 2002: 85.). Previous policy initiatives to develop elements of an EYEC system have stalled without enacting legislation (Ball, 1994: 13.). To view England’s early years policy trajectory through the guiding prism of Esping-Andersen’s welfare state typologies, such policy absence and welfare residualism is typical of the liberal welfare state (Esping-Andersen, 1999: 75.). It also reflects the enduring background influence of the maternal care frame and its institutionalisation in the English welfare state (Randall, 2000: 13.). This frame views maternal care as the ideal for young children, helping to entrench the assumption that mothers should be the primary carers of the young. Historically, English social protection policies have been based this sort of male breadwinner family model (Lewis, 2006: 5.). Whilst England has never followed this policy frame to its logical conclusion by providing a full maternal care allowance; the state has provided some protections based upon the recognition of (maternal) care roles.

As such, the development of EYEC policy during the mid-1990s marks a significant break with the past; when broadly taken together, these EYEC policies radically reconfigure the relationship between the state, mothers and their children. Moreover, these policies represent a significant *expansion* of social policy; extending England’s welfare state into new domains

of social provision, some of which are based upon the principle of universality. This is an entirely unexpected move for a supposed liberal welfare state, which mainstream research considers to be moving towards general retrenchment (Pierson, 2001: 433.). In any case, the development of a new area of social policy is a significant event, requiring committed political intention to effect such change. The natural question to ask at such a point is: what factors precipitate and motivate political agents to enact these innovative reforms, especially where there has been little institutional legacy?

This chapter, and the next, account for the political impetus to develop EYEC policies in England and explain the underlying reasons behind these political developments. Such a task is necessarily complex. A full explanation would involve elucidating the interplay between the underlying material and social structural change, institutional developments and the ascendancy of new EYEC ideational frames which have precipitated the necessary ideational pressures and institutional conditions conducive to policy change and agential innovation. My analysis takes a historical approach and seeks to trace how an established ideational and institutional matrix informed by maternal care ideas and exhibiting classic liberal features could come to be destabilised and superseded by feminist pressure and a set of ‘scientifically informed’ EYEC ideas, which assert the importance of the early years for future outcomes.

The analysis is centred upon the identification and explanation of underlying social structural shifts, evolving practices of policy making within institutions, alongside developments in EYEC ideas, evidence and knowledge. In combination these factors precipitated a contingent period of ‘open space’ in the policy process. I argue that the mid-1990s, marked the (re)turn to evidence-based policy making within the social policy realm. Tracing how such evidence

has been utilised within the political process is central to understanding the recent commitment and state investment within the early years. The following chapter shows that the turn to ‘evidence’ and expertise has been precipitated through a reaction to the New Public Management (NPM) era and that a post-NPM agenda for change within both within various government departments and New Labour in opposition. I argue that this has created the right institutional and political conditions for the ascendancy of evidence-based policy making and an openness in the policy process to external sources of (scientific) evidence. Alongside these underlying institutional changes, the appearance of a set of scientifically informed EYEC ideas (arising principally from research in the US), articulated skilfully by a network of early years advocates and academics, created a persuasive discursive imperative linked with a set of specific rationalisations for significant investment in the early years and, in particular, the importance of early years development and education. The next chapter will show how this new ‘scientific’ early years evidence has destabilised and superseded the existing latent maternal care frame, where other policy rationalisations – especially those based upon feminist ideas (as developed in an equal opportunities frame for EYEC) – had previously failed to gain ascendancy and to motivate change in isolation. These institutional conditions and ideational frames have led to a tipping point of pressure where state disinterest and inactivity in the field of EYEC policy could no longer be justified.

The next chapter argues that scientific EYEC ideas and evidence have had a profound effect upon the social policy trajectory in England; opening the political process to academics and advocates who had previously been closed (or at least held a marginal position) from the policy process. Whilst government policy has often been aided and guided by external expertise – indeed expertise it is as old as government itself – it is novel for social policy to be

driven by external evidence to such a great extent and for policy to be justified with reference to such evidence (Fisher, 2003: 2.). However, an important caveat needs to be entered. The chapter will show that whilst New Labour has devoted a particular attention to developing and rationalising social policy investments on the basis of EYEC evidence, this has not entailed a coherent process or a straight correspondence between one single set or frame of early years ‘evidence’ and subsequent (coherent) policy development. Indeed, the chapter demonstrates that, in the moment of ‘open space’, disparate and partially conflicting set of EYEC frames and evidence entered the policy area. Each EYEC frame in some ways rationalises investments in the early years, but all articulate (sometimes subtly) different discursive constructions of EYEC and back qualitatively different policy models. Hence, whilst the network of early years academics and experts made their arguments for investing in the early years more powerful by combining different frames to justify state investments, the unintended effect was to create conflicting messages about the purpose of EYEC and, thus, the best policy model to follow. The next chapter will explain the specific ways in which various EYEC frames have been utilised by different areas of government and within different EYEC programmes. This has generated a ‘scattergun’ approach to policy making and a relatively unstable discursive articulation of the character and purposes of EYEC. Rather than embodying a stable child-centred investment or ‘LEGO’ paradigm (Jensen and Saint-Martin, 2006), England’s EYEC policy trajectory is complex, unstable and has not always embodied specifically ‘child-centred’ investments. Driven by multiple ideational frames, New Labour’s initial policy approach has not been entirely coherent. Much to the disappointment of early years academics and advocates, it does not appear to have transcended the historic institutionalisation of a fragmented (albeit very limited) EYEC system, polarised between ‘early education’ and ‘childcare’.

The next chapter will chart the ways in which New Labour have latterly sought to bring coherence to their EYEC policy through interdepartmental reviews, the dissenting voices of the Select Committee on Education and Employment and the OECD; all of which have sought to steer the government towards a more child-centred frame for EYEC and to integrate services. Whilst there has been some progress towards integrating services, the chapter will explore how, over time, Labour's commitment to a modernisation project based on evidence-based policy making has set institutional conditions which have selected for the ascendancy and embedding of the 'scientific' educative, neuroscientific and social engineering frames. Hence it is these ideas which come dominate the government's EYEC policy agenda (and to which the lion's share of resources have been devoted). This may have limited the scope to develop a fully integrated and child-centred vision for EYEC; one which actually puts children at the heart of policy development (rather than treating them instrumentally) and equally negated the ability of policy to fully address gender concerns.

2.1 EYEC policy pre-1990s: the dominance of the maternal care frame and the 'hands off' state

Until recently, EYEC policy has been 'the sootiest of British "Cinderella" services, holding a marginal place in both the theory and practice of the UK's welfare state' (Wincott 2006: 286). Moreover, as Randall argues, the failure to develop strong national interventionist policies around the family, the labour market or social equality that could have provided a propitious

context for the latter emergence of public childcare provision⁵¹, all show England conforming to a liberal welfare state type (2000: 176.). Indeed, built into the conditions of England's welfare provisions and social rights have been the assumption of stable nuclear families based upon a gendered division of domestic caring labour (Prideaux, 2005: 139.). As O'Conner et al., describe it 'a male breadwinner-female housewife logic which implies strong gender differentiation' (1999: 195.). In this way, the lack of adequate childcare is cited as evidence of this unfolding gender logic and the consequence being that 'defamilialization' (the extent to which households welfare and caring responsibilities are relaxed) occurs purely through market forms both for supply (fees) and demand (commercial or employer provision) (Mahon, 2002: 6.).

But why would there be a historical reluctance on the part of the state to socialise care and instead prioritise the nuclear family model in social provisions? The English policy trajectory has been largely defined by the enduring influence of the maternal care frame. Its influence in political circles and subsequent concretisation in policy has set discursive and latterly institutional limits on the development of extensive state provision of childcare. As has been elaborated previously, the maternal care frame assumes by default that mothers provide the best care of the young (indeed it is *necessary* for children's wellbeing to become securely attached to a primary carer) and hence it is only those mothers who are seriously *deficient* in providing care (or have desperate circumstances negating their ability to care) who require state intervention. Indeed, as the UK Central Policy Review Staff reporting on services for young children with working mothers in 1978 comments, 'hitherto the assumption has been that the parents and in particular the mother can normally cope unaided with a child's first 5

⁵¹ As indeed happened in Sweden.

years of life with a certain amount of fairly elementary help on health and development’ (CPRS, 1978: 11.). This assumption that the majority of mothers are able to and therefore should take responsibility for children’s care in the early years, has led to a deliberate policy of state absence in the field of childcare and other intervention policies to aid mothers to enter the labour market. Under the influence of the maternal frame, childcare policy discussions have implicitly centred on protections for those children who were ‘needy’ or indeed at ‘risk of neglect’. In this way, rather than state intervention in childcare entailing a (positive) social right for parents, policy was constructed as a (negative) provision for ‘problem’ families. Childcare and early years policies have thus been considered a ‘marginal’ policy concern for the ‘margins’ of society. Such ideas have been concretised in the institutionalisation of childcare as a residual ‘welfare issue’ located in the Department of Health and Social Security (DHSS) (Bacchi, 1999: 137.). Placing childcare policy within the DHSS has conditioned policy development for childcare through a health and social services perspective. As such, the Children’s division focused policy development upon delinquency, children at risk, children’s health and adoption (CPRS, 1978: 59.). At local authority level, childcare places in ‘day nurseries’ were necessarily been restricted by Social Services departments to those in dire need and strictly controlled. As the Central Policy Review Staff report asserts:

“places in day nurseries [are only given] after a recommendation has been made by a social worker and the case has been considered by a committee consisting of the social worker, health visitor and nursery matron concerned, even where the needs of the child or its family for the place at the day nursery are extremely pressing.... the top priority for nursery places is given to children who are ‘at risk’ or who are thought to have been damaged by their parents; children with unsatisfactory housing conditions

are given some priority as are the children of single parent families where their parent is if anxious and able to return to work” (CPRS, 1978: 50.).

Over time, neither the Labour nor Conservative governments sought to expand such services, nor widen eligibility. Indeed, even by the end of the 1980s, the Children Act of 1989 contained a public duty to provide ‘day care’ services, but only for children defined by welfare authorities as ‘in need’ (Moss and Penn, 1996: 36.). In practice, Social Services departments during the Thatcher era were increasingly inclined to narrow the use of publicly funded services purely for those at risk of physical or sexual abuse, further undermining public provision of childcare for lone or working parents (Bacchi, 1999: 137.). Moreover, the numbers of local authority day care nurseries fell during the 1980s, from 32,000 (in 1980) to 30,000 in 1990 (Ringin, 1997: 77.). Such narrow eligibility and falling provision is reflected by the fact that by 1990, only 8% of pre-school children (four and under) were in a local authority day nursery (ibid: 73.).

Whilst the prominence of the maternal care frame has conditioned the development of a limited ‘childcare’ service (and gender differentiated notions of care), it has consequently led to the provision of some social entitlements on the principle of maternal care. The introduction of child benefit (replacing family allowances) phased in during 1977-9 gave entitlements to the first child and upgraded benefit levels (Sainsbury, 1996: 79.). This was a comparatively generous child benefit package and meant that until 1988 lone mothers received relatively higher means-tested benefits than couples (Lewis, 1997: 14.). Even in the context of ascending neo-conservative ideas which lamented the existence of non-working lone mothers as evidence a growing underclass who were, by such circumstances, ‘welfare

dependent', the Conservatives remained ambivalent about whether to encourage mothers to work outside the home. As late as 1990, the National Audit Office iterated the Government's official policy of neutrality regarding lone mother's employment (ibid: 66.).

The influence and persistence of the maternal care frame has also partly hindered the ascendancy of early years 'educative ideas' in policy discussions (despite the best efforts of early years education advocates and academics) and this has prevented the development of a universal nursery education system in the England. Indeed, whilst nursery education in some ways has a stronger, albeit limited policy legacy than that of day nurseries, the enduring idea that mothers should be the primary carers of young children (and involved in their early experiences and education), has marginalised the development of a comprehensive publicly funded EYEC system through an educative agenda. As has been previously elaborated, a maternal care frame is sceptical of the benefits of centre-based group care; an underling theory of 'attachment' prioritises a one-to-one care relationship ideally in a domestic setting for the majority of the time. In many ways, these ideas have served to condition policy recommendations for nursery education. Indeed the discussion of pre-school provision in the Plowden Report, *Children and Their Primary Schools* (1967) reveals underlying assumptions about the primacy of maternal care and the restriction of places to those 'in need'⁵². Plowden recommended full-time attendance at nursery for only 15 per cent of three and four year olds; these being the number of children who were considered needy enough to attend full-time because their home circumstances are poor (Kiernan, Land & Lewis: 1998: 249.). As the report states 'the children of very large families, those from overcrowded homes, homes with

⁵² Being in need here implied that the home circumstance was less than ideal, rather than construing 'need' or 'risk' on a socio-economic basis (as formed the principles of the social engineering frame).

only one parent or with sick mothers' (cited in, *ibid.*). Indeed it was considered 'generally undesirable, except to prevent a greater evil, to separate mother and child for a whole day in nursery... it is no business of the education service to encourage these [working mothers]' (CASE, 1967, cited in Browne, 1996: 372.). There was a general concern that expanding nursery education towards a comprehensive system (along the lines of a school day or longer) would prevent mothers from being involved with their children's early experiences. Unlike mother and toddler groups and playgroups, nursery classes separated the mother and child for long periods of time and in many ways this was seen as potentially damaging to both children and mothers ⁵³(Plowden, 1987: 123.). Indeed as the majority of mothers stayed at home to care for children at this time (indeed many married women were housewives), maternal care ideas resonated with the existing family structures and as such it was easy to simply assume that mothers would only want services which enhanced their role as primary carers and an opposition to services which supplanted their role.

A later education White Paper, *Education: A Framework for Expansion* (1972) argued for the first significant increase in educational nursery provision since wartime nurseries and yet similarly framed a proposed expansion of (part time) nursery education around those particularly at risk (Ringin, 1997: 74; Bruner, 1980: xvi). Moreover, whilst the White Paper acknowledged to some extent the 'importance of the years before five in a child's education', the promise made by Margaret Thatcher (then Education Secretary) to expand services with a view to developing towards universal provision rapidly faded and both Conservative and Labour governments subsequently failed to implement this plan (Ringin, 1997: 74; Ball,

⁵³ Indeed it was the problem of loneliness and boredom, even depression which conditioned policy makers away from managed nursery provisions and instead to encourage part-time services which allowed mother and child to stay together (Plowden, 1987: 123; CPRS, 1978: 23.).

1994: 7.). In part, general political opinion appeared to remain conditioned by maternal care ideas and against any 'care' policies which would prevent children from being with their mothers. As Patrick Jenkin, Secretary of State for Social Security State for Social Security stated 'I don't think mothers have the same right to work as fathers... these are the biological facts; young children do depend upon their mothers' (1979, cited in Ringin, 1997: 74.). There were also embedded institutional constraints. There was a lack of a specific grant for early learning and local authorities had no duty to provide one. In this way, nursery education had to compete for resources with all other areas of local government responsibility, such as libraries, adult education or services for old people (Ball, 1994: 11.). In austere times, nursery education was an easy cut for local authorities to make⁵⁴.

Alongside the enduring maternal care frame, another factor which conditioned against substantial investments in early years education and nursery schools was the perceived lack of specific evidence that managed early years settings such as of that in a nursery (as opposed to that of their mothers or other domestic setting), were necessary to develop children's educational capacity. Whilst educational researchers (as has been outlined in 'the educative frame') sought to develop the case that all children would benefit from early years education, their research was hampered by the lack of convincing or hard evidence on the both the necessity of 'early education' for future performance and that nursery education provided benefits that were better than that of other early experiences (being with mother; childminder;

⁵⁴ According to the CPRS report there had been some expansion between 1972 and 1975. However, in 1975 public expenditure cuts caused severe cut backs in the programme. Local authorities were free to decide whether or not to provide nursery education which further hampered the policy (CPRS, 1978: 62.).

playgroup)⁵⁵. Indeed their focus has been predominantly upon dispelling the notion that managed settings away from mothers, damaged children (and as such used as a last resort). Whilst educational researchers made progress with building the case for nursery education, the Department for Education remained sceptical that early education was advantageous, especially in the long term (Ball, 1994: 11.) Even by the end of the 1980s there were doubts about the efficacy of early education. As the minutes of evidence of the Education, Science and Arts Committee reveal when considering whether there were advantages to having a 'pre-school education' system the Committee stated that the research evidence was 'properly cautious about the causal link' (1989: 140.). Hence limited resources would 'confine further expansion of provision in the immediate future to the areas of greatest social deprivation' (ibid: 149.). As such, nursery education places only slowly increased over years, by 1991 only 26% of three and four year olds having a place (roughly 15% of overall pre-school children), 80% of which was part time⁵⁶ (Browne, 1996: 366; Ringin, 1997: 73.).

It perhaps would be expected with such state reticence to provide publicly-funded EYEC services and other labour market activation policies, that female labour market participation would be relatively low in England. However, despite the lack of state support, many women and mothers increasingly entered the labour market. Indeed, the overall female labour force

⁵⁵ Indeed as Smith argues the dismal results emanating from Head Start during the 1960s and 1970s conditioned policy makers away from developing Educational Priority Areas and the faith in the power of education to combat poverty (1987: 34.).

⁵⁶ Many four year olds were increasingly being admitted to reception classes in primary schools. Whilst there had been a policy in many local authorities to admit 'rising fives' (children admitted at the start of the term in which they would turn five) a trend towards once-yearly admission led to younger four year olds being admitted (Ball, 1994: 33.). The problem with admitting the younger children to school is that primary school teachers (at this time) were not specifically trained in early years education and hence the primary school curriculum would not always be appropriate for this age group.

participation rate (of prime age women – twenty-five to fifty-four years old) gradually rose from 62.1% in 1980, to 67.7% in 1985, to 73% in 1990 and 74% by 1995 (ILO; 2008.). Such a figure is comparatively high if compared to Southern European countries, but lower than the Nordic countries.

The increasing proportion of mothers working provides the most striking figures. In the heyday of the ‘male breadwinner family form’ during the 1950s only 15% of women with children under five worked and as such appeared to conform to state preferences for maternal care. During the latter half of the century there was a significant increase in working mothers with young children (Kiernan, Land and Lewis, 1998: 245.). Between 1979 and 1995, the proportion of working mothers with pre-school children (under five) almost doubled from 26% to 48% (ibid.). Although much of this increase was due to mothers working part time, it was clear that the traditional family structures and maternal care norm on which English social protection policies had been based were being eroded by the entry of women and mothers into the labour force (despite significant structural constraints). An increasingly sharp disjuncture was appearing between existing social policy ideas (and provision) and underlying social-structural change. Hacker identifies such a process as ‘policy drift’; ‘changes in the operation or effect of policies that occur without significant changes in those policies structure’ (2004: 246.). Indeed, as women sought to enter the labour market in ever greater numbers, the ability of England’s ‘maternal care’ frame of social provision to account and provide for this evolving social reality weakened. In this case, such ‘policy drift’ was adversely affecting the ability of existing frameworks of social provision to deal with major life contingencies (in this case childbirth) leading to the appearance of ‘new social risks’ to which the English welfare state could not adequately respond (ibid; Lewis, 2005: 54.).

Moreover, an underlying pressure for childcare services developed, as more women sought to reconcile work and family life. A childcare crisis was emerging.

In such contexts of rapid material changes within the social structure the maternal care frame might be expected to come under challenge and be destabilised (or at least become unstable). State actors, reflexively monitoring such changes, might seek to adapt to these ‘new social risks’ by updating social provisions and prompting innovations in EYEC services – especially those that dealt with ‘childcare’. In relation to the Canadian case Jensen argues that it was ‘new social risks [that] have promoted policy innovation’ (2004: 180.). However, this was not (straightforwardly) the case in the England. Even by the end of the 1980s when the lack of childcare spaces was extremely pressing, the Conservatives refused to acknowledge that the state should provide ‘childcare’ services save for those greatly at risk. As John Pattern, Chair of the Ministerial group on working Women’s Issues stated ‘I don’t think that the state should step in to help working mothers unless her life has collapsed’ (1989, cited in Browne, 1996: 371.). In this way, as Harker argues, the emergence of risk-benefit mismatches should be viewed as a process that is highly mediated by politics (2004: 246.). Hence there is no inevitability that welfare states will fall into line with prevailing social trends, nor that actors perceive or respond to underlying material changes to the social structure in ways that will be expected (or indeed rational). EYEC policy in this case was being allowed to drift ever further as an official policy of neutrality over mothers labour market participation, obscured a policy framework that disincentivised mothers labour market participation (providing bad terms on which to enter and often unsuitable places for children) and implicitly favoured maternal care. As John Major stated: ‘We have always made it clear that is not for the

government to encourage or discourage women with children to go out to work' (1990, cited in Ringin, 1997: 74.).

Such underpinning structures and state inactivity in updating social policy provision created a policy vacuum between the limited state funded EYEC services and the choices women were actively seeking to make; one which increasingly being filled by private and informal EYEC provision. Private and informal provision (private day nurseries, childminders/nannies, playgroups and friends and relatives) had always been a feature of the England's EYEC provision and indeed explains partly how mother's labour market participation was able to increase; albeit that in the absence of central organisation and subsidisation of costs such opportunities were unequally distributed (by location and income), often unreliable and moreover had no guarantees of a level of quality. A dual policy trend developed, with slow growth⁵⁷ in publicly funded EYEC services against a rapidly expanding private market for childcare. This gathered pace during the 1980s as mothers' labour market participation spiked. Private nursery places almost quadrupled between 1980 and 1991⁵⁸ (Ball, 1994: 32.). Registered childminders had similarly grown in numbers to meet demand, with over double the numbers from 1980 to 1991⁵⁹ (ibid.). In this way, the qualitative texture of EYEC provision was evolving into an increasingly private model.

⁵⁷ Which refers to overall growth which as has been discussed is made up from part time nursery education places, as daycare places in nurseries were falling.

⁵⁸ In 1980 there were 22,017 places in private nurseries and by 1991 there were 79,029. A percentage change of 259% (Ball, 1994: 32.).

⁵⁹ In 1980 there were 98,495 childcare places increasing to 233,258 by 1991. A percentage change of 137% (Ball, 1994: 32.).

By the early 1990s, England's EYEC policy trajectory, through the confluence of maternal care ideas, the fragmented institutional frameworks in which EYEC policy was developed and an absence of gender equity concerns in political circles (which may have been able to counter the status quo), appeared to be locked (or lapsing) into exhibiting an increasingly 'liberal' welfare state formation⁶⁰. In this liberal sense (child) care work and children's education and development was left to be negotiated in the private realm of the family and the job of expanding services was being left to the markets and informal sectors. Indeed, at this time there appeared to be no real necessity from the perspective of the state to intervene much in pre-school children's lives, save to look after their health and to protect those at risk of neglect. Of course, the non-development of EYEC provision under the Conservatives also reflected their ambition for a general reduction of the role of the state in social, economic and political life, as embodied in their attempts to retrenchment many existing areas of social provision as well as their reforms of public administration informed by the ideas associated with the 'New Public Management'. However, particular developments in the understandings of early years and the consequences for future educative, social and developmental outcomes would come to destabilise the prevailing status quo and latent maternal care ideas, pushing EYEC onto the policy radar, even during the height of neo-liberal restructuring; the most austere of times.

⁶⁰ In other areas of social policy which were more firmly entrenched and extensive (and as such exhibiting social democratic tendencies) could be defended from prevailing neo-liberal forces seeking to retrench the welfare state, in the case of EYEC there was hardly enough existing policy to 'retrench'.

2.2 A crack in the policy paradigm? Developments in EYEC ideas and Major's nursery vouchers experiment

While England's EYEC policy framework appeared to be locked into a self-reinforcing trajectory of retrenchment, ideational developments were afoot which were about to begin the process of destabilising existing maternal care ideas within government circles. As has been discussed above, by the end of the 1980s, the early years academics who had been attempting to press the state to invest in early years education and nursery schools though their 'educative' agenda were having difficulties making claims that early years education superseded maternal and informal care. Moreover, that early education had effects on subsequent outcomes. However, the publication of Schweinhart and Weikart's longitudinal study of High/Scope in 1993 (albeit that it has its ideational roots in a social engineering frame), appeared to give early years education academics the 'hook' on which to catch government attention and to begin to promote their own educative research and, as such, begin to destabilise latent maternal care ideas.

A few academics and practitioners working specifically within early education research had always had some access to government policy discussions, via Select Committees and commissioned research for the DES during the 1970s⁶¹ (although this relationship declined during the 1980s and began to re-emerge in the early 1990s as will be discussed later). A member of the various committees and government enquires during the early 1990s, Dr Chris Pascal (2006) has noted that as a community they had been quite strategic in the way that they

⁶¹ As has been discussed within the earlier chapter, educative researchers had been involved since the mid-1960s-1970s in developing evidence in support of developing early education services for the DES (and subsequently DfEE) and latterly the Education, Science and Arts Committee.

had presented the case for early education, playing hardball and switching between frames and discourses (talking economics, or welfare strategies, if they needed to). High/Scope provided some apparently ‘hard’ evidence that early education had benefits for the wider society and economy. Elements of the High/Scope research which highlighted reductions in juvenile delinquency particularly impressed the Home Office (Randall, 2000: 97.). Moreover, Schweinhart and Weikhart’s cost benefit analysis rationalised investment as economically efficient, investing one dollar to secure seven in return (1993: 5.). This powerful rationalisation for investment built upon on the recently produced government enquiry, *Starting with Quality (The Rumbold Report)*, which had sought, despite the limited original brief, to develop the case that ‘schools and parents, are not the sole educators of 3 and 4 year olds’ and articulate a conception of quality into existing early years settings and to condition policy making towards managed settings (1990: 1.). In this way, if High/Scope evidence articulated the ‘macro social benefits’ of pre-school education for the margins of society, the Rumbold Report made the case that this should occur in managed pre-schools. Through the combined articulation of these reports, the cracks were beginning to show in the maternal care frame and early education academics were well placed to make the case for extending early education services for all. However, whilst academics had lobbied hard to secure a commitment to expand nursery education places, making the case that only high quality (state) settings could secure the educative and social gains that High/Scope rationalised, the government were ideologically committed to expanding services purely through the markets (Pascal, 2006). Indeed, despite the evidence, the cost of providing such publicly funded services appeared to be too high for the government; as Pascal noted the discussions concluded that there the country couldn’t possibly afford it and there were objections from DfEE itself (ibid; Randall, 2000: 98.).

Whilst Major had initially talked of creating a universal provision for three and four year olds (in December 1993), the proposals were significantly watered down over time and by July 1995, the government announced that they would provide a £1100 ‘voucher’ for part-time pre-school education for four year olds only⁶² (ibid.). This was framed as a policy which would allow parental ‘choice’ over their four year olds pre-school education⁶³. Despite, the scheme setting some minor educative conditions that providers would have to fulfil in order to receive vouchers⁶⁴ (hence childminders were generally excluded from the programme) the policy was not designed to expand the supply of places or develop the quality of early education. Indeed in practice, it was actually a retraction of public spending on nursery education; funds were removed from LEA budgets and transferred to parents in order to stimulate demand (Crouch, 2000: 127.). For some, the proposals were simply a sleight of hand by the Major government, as the increasing trend for schools to take four year olds would already account for three quarters of four year olds in 1994 (Ball, 1994: 33.). Indeed, the vouchers exacerbated this trend as LEA’s responded to the loss of funds by attempting to capture the rest of the four year old population and their voucher money (Crouch, 2000: 127.).

⁶² The programme was initially a pilot and was actually introduced in April 1997 and would quickly be abolished by New Labour (Crouch, 2000: 127.).

⁶³ As the Education Secretary Gillian Shepherd asserted: ‘the voucher scheme puts parental choice at its centre. It allows parents to choose pre-school education in the maintained sector, the private sector and the voluntary sector’ (HC, 1996).

⁶⁴ The providers that could enter the scheme were maintained schools, independent schools, and private and voluntary sector institutions registered under the Children Act 1989. All providers were told that they must work towards the set of desirable learning outcomes developed by the SCAA (School Curriculum and Assessment Authority) and they must submit to inspection by the chief inspector of schools (HC, 1996.). This was heavily criticised latterly by Labour as ‘an attempt to achieve expansion on the cheap, [hence] quality standards have been watered down to the lowest common denominator [and that] new providers have only to complete a self-assessment from to qualify to take in four year olds’ (Labour, 1996: 5.).

Whilst the Conservatives had started to accept the idea that early education *might* be important for subsequent outcomes, scepticism still remained over where this should occur. As such, the voucher policy was in many ways a small experiment; a concession to the early education lobby. Indeed, before the government would consider further proposals to develop a specific ‘early years education’ policy they still required more evidence and preferably that which emanated from the UK case rather than borrowing US data. Hence in 1996 the DfEE funded its own longitudinal study, EPPE (Effective Provision of Pre-School Education), the original brief of which was to ascertain whether it really did make a difference to children’s outcomes if they attended a certain type of early years provision (nursery schools, nursery classes or playgroups) or just stayed at home and hence whether it would be cost-effective and educationally beneficial to invest in EYEC (Penn, 2006.). That this would lay the foundations of a strong institutional evidential base for developing ‘educative’ EYEC policy during the New Labour era was perhaps an unintended effect of such scepticism over the importance of the early years and an arms-length attitude to the evidence. Clearly however, the ‘maternal care’ framework appeared to be increasingly under ideational challenge from the ‘educative’ agenda.

2.3 Feminist challenges to the maternal care frame: developing childcare for equality of opportunities?

Whilst maternal care ideas had become heavily embedded within the institutions of the welfare state, thereby closing off gender concerns and which would latterly only start to become destabilised by particular *educative* ideas, the Labour party in opposition were becoming increasingly receptive to the ‘equality of opportunity’ frame. Feminist Labour MPs

were beginning to stress the case for adequate quality childcare. As Margaret Hodge asserted in interview, the very early roots of (New) Labour's interest in EYEC arose out of a feminist agenda and that a group of women activists within the voluntary sector, the labour party and in particular a key caucus of feminists, Harriet Harman, Pat Hewitt, Tessa Jowell⁶⁵ who were around at the right place, at the right time, were pivotal to getting childcare onto the policy agenda (Hodge, 2007). Indeed, out of office during the early 1980s Labour had little to say about the family and was ambivalent to the issue of childcare (Coote, Harman and Hewitt, 1990: 13). As Harriet Harman noted:

“in the early 1980s when I spoke to the House of Commons calling for more nurseries and after-school clubs, I was jeered – by my own side as well as by the Tories... the overwhelmingly male parliament just could not see the point of even discussing it” (2004, cited in Childs, 2004: vii.).

By the end of the 1980s it was apparent that the Left shifted its position away from echoing the Right's defence of the traditional family model, to a more positive endorsement of women's equality and choice (Coote, Harman and Hewitt, 1990: 4.). Indeed Labour appeared to be taking the idea of equal opportunities and childcare much more seriously and links were developing between feminist MPs and party members and advocates for childcare, such as the Daycare Trust (Penn, 2007). The Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR), a left-wing think tank founded in 1988 (to compete with existing New Right tanks) that had close links

⁶⁵ Some of which like Harman were already MPs and others like Hewitt and Jowell would latterly become MPs, but were closely connected to the Labour party.

with the Labour party⁶⁶ was particularly active in feeding in equality of opportunity ideas to the Labour policy machine as part of the first stages of the modernisation of the Labour Party. The policy document, *The Family Way: A New Approach to Policy Making*, outlined the case for state investment in childcare. It recognised that major social changes could not be ignored by the state and (although it did not phrase it in the same way) that ‘new social risks’ needed to be reconciled with the structures of social provisions. Indeed as a result of changes in employment patterns ‘fewer women and virtually no men, are willing or able to be full-time parents for five years or longer, then children will need alternative child care provision’ (Coote, Harman and Hewitt, 1990: 39.). Hence public investment in childcare was necessary to firstly account for these changing social conditions and promote equality of opportunities as ‘the expectation that women will do most of the caring severely restricts their employment prospects, the losses for the women are substantial’ and in this way ‘proper child care provision – including policies which make it easier for women, and also men, to *combine* family responsibilities with employment’ would be beneficial for both ‘the economy, as well as the interests of individual women’ (ibid.).

The result of this feminist pressure can be seen within the Labour Party’s policy review at the end of the 1980s, *Meet the challenge: Make the Change*, which made a clear commitment to state investment in childcare framed through ‘equality of opportunities’. As it states:

“lack of childcare is the single most important obstacle to equal opportunities between women and men. It restricts women’s opportunities to study, seek and retain paid

⁶⁶ Indeed Patricia Hewitt was deputy director from 1989 to 1994, was previously Press and Broadcasting secretary and policy co-ordinator for the Leader of the Opposition, Neil Kinnock (Coote, Harman, Hewitt, 1990: 3.).

employment, participate in public life, recreation and leisure... we shall therefore place a statutory duty on all local authorities to provide comprehensive, integrated childcare services for the under 5's and 5-14 year olds out of school care" (1989: 62.).

Thus significant feminist mobilisation within the Labour party was able to centrally attack the existing maternal care framework of social provision and had appeared to have secured 'childcare' and the promotion of gender concerns as a key policy priority for the Labour party⁶⁷. Indeed, it would have been interesting to see whether, had Labour secured the 1992 general election, policy initiatives would have developed on the basis of this frame for EYEC. However, this was not to be the case and a latter IPPR paper for the Commission on Social Justice⁶⁸, *Social Justice, Children and Families*, published in 1993, revealed a developing set of new concerns around EYEC policy and a seeming discursive shift away from the 'equality of opportunities' frame. As it states:

"There is no doubt that there is an unmet need for collective childcare provision; that such provision is of benefit in itself to some infants and toddlers; and that, in the form

⁶⁷ Indeed whilst for constraints of space this thesis focuses on 'childcare' policies as an aid to gender equality, *Meet the Challenge* makes clear that 'it is essential to encourage men to play a much greater role in caring for their families... Labour will implement a series of measures to assist both women and men to combine family and work more fully... under Labour the Department of Employment will work closely with the Women's Ministry to ensure that women's interests are reflected across the full range of employment policy' (1989: 22.). Moreover, Gordon Brown latterly asserted 'the time for patriarchal and class-bound Conservatism, the New Right or even past Labour' was now over: not least because 'for the first time the majority of women are in the labour force, demanding an economic policy built around the needs of women' (1994, cited in Coates and Oettinger, 2007: 119.).

⁶⁸ The Commission on Social Justice was established at the instigation of John Smith, Leader of the Labour Party at the end of 1992. The Commission's remit was to develop a new social and economic vision for the UK. The IPPR's policy papers were designed to promote policy debate around these issues (Hewitt and Leach, 1993: i.).

of pre-school education, it benefits almost all pre-school children. But the full day care, 8am-6pm, that fits the male model of work is seldom ideal from the children's point of view, may be far from ideal for the youngest groups and does not seem to be what most parents would choose" (Hewitt and Leach, 1993: 22.).

Indeed, it seemed that whilst maternal care ideas had been successfully superseded within Labour's discursive lexicon and hence a positive state role was required to reconcile 'care', it appeared that a discursive tension was developing between childcare as a service to aid working women against childcare services which met the needs of children, especially those in their early years. As *Social Justice* makes clear, 'collective provision for the care of young children should be primarily designed to meet the children's needs and only secondarily the needs of employed parents or those who employ them' (ibid: 26.).

This discursive tension appears at first puzzling and may even appear to be harking back to older ideas which questioned the effect of full daycare on children. However, rather than this policy document exhibiting a straight-forward retraction of gender equity concerns in the context of Labour's ongoing modernisation programme- indeed these feminist ideas and feminist pressures for childcare remained⁶⁹ - other ideational processes were again at work, adding to the ideational complexity of EYEC policy. Indeed the circulation of new EYEC ideas in academic and the think tank community appeared to be modifying or, as such, adding discursive layers over the framing of childcare policy and the way in which children's 'early years' were being conceptualised and their relative importance for future outcomes.

⁶⁹ Indeed feminist mobilisation remained, principally from Harriet Harman, who absolutely insisted that a 'childcare agenda' remained a key policy plank of the 1997 manifesto.

2.4 The importance of the ‘early years’: the ‘early years glitterati’ and a revolution in EYEC ideas

During the 1980s, a loose network of early education academics, practitioners, childcare advocates and academics from the Thomas Coram Research Unit and Oxford Pre-School research group was developing around EYEC policy (Pascal, 2006). Although the network members hailed from different academic disciplines, identified with particular EYEC frames (as has been outlined previously) and as such were looking to forward different agendas (in some ways radically), the network was brought together through a mutual apprehension of the state of England’s EYEC system (or lack there of) and the growth of private markets in EYEC (Penn, 2007). Indeed as Pascal noted:

“right back in the 80s we had started to have visions and ambitions, to talk to people and network and have a sense of - this isn’t right – this policy and the marketisation that was beginning to happen in the early years. We were deeply troubled by ‘put it out to the marketplace – just make it childcare - make it cheap and cheerful’ and this downward pressure of a formal curriculum... we were deeply troubled about what was going on and very aware of what was going on in the rest of Europe that was disconnecting us - kids that were growing up in England were being disenfranchised and disadvantaged” (2006).

In this way, despite theoretical and normative differences over conceptions of ‘early childhood’ and ideal EYEC policy models, the ‘early years glitterati’ (as eminent educational theorist, Ted Wragg referred to them) sought to combine forces to push an agenda for a proper

EYEC system in common with other European countries⁷⁰. Unlike particular ‘educative’ researchers who had some limited access to the DES (latterly DfEE) through nursery education policy, many of the network members working from ‘equal opportunities or ‘child centred frames’ had either very limited or no involvement with existing policy debates as the early years were the preserve of parents. When, in the late 1980s, Labour asserted an interest in ‘childcare’ and was developing links towards feminist advocates forwarding an equal opportunities frame, it made sense to combine efforts with those from the educative and child-centred backgrounds to generate as much research and expertise to attempt to shape the policy priorities of the Labour party in the context of their modernisation project, indeed a few were seeking to develop a policy model of ‘integrated’ EYEC systems which could potentially combine agendas. As has been outlined in the previous chapter, many of the ideas around particular frames had lengthy ideational roots and many from the ‘educative’ field were seeking to generate ‘hard’ empirical evidence on the benefits of early years education having already picked up upon US research on High/Scope. In the early 1990s however, new neuroscientific ideas on early brain development also started to infiltrate the network (albeit that some members stood highly opposed to the frame both normatively and prescriptively). Indeed neuroscientific ideas had just come onto stream as some members of the network were compiling a report for the Royal Society of Arts, *Right Start: the importance of early learning*, led by Sir Christopher Ball, which sought to make the case for early education⁷¹. For the educative researchers, such ideas lent powerful ‘scientific’ rationalisations for the

⁷⁰ Even though the particular European countries which such researchers would seek to emulate would differ (with ‘educative’ researchers seeking to emulate France; Feminists, Sweden; and Child-centred academics, Denmark and Reggio Emilia in Italy).

⁷¹ This principally aimed to secure in current policy the limited agenda of nursery education for 3 and 4 year olds as they were operating within the hostile context of existing Conservative rule.

necessity to invest in universal early education: indeed rather than the early years just being important, they could now increasingly be considered ‘crucial’ for subsequent development and cognitive outcomes⁷² and not just for those in certain socio-economic groups (as High/Scope evidence rationalised). Indeed as has been outlined previously, the discourse of neuroscience considers the first five years of life fundamental and that *all* children benefit from rich stimulating learning experiences. It also, however, drew in to some extent the experience and expertise of those advocates and academics working from a child-centred frame, who were seeking to push within England an emulation of the social pedagogical tradition of particular Nordic states and Reggio Emilia in Italy. Here these countries had long periods of pre-school, beginning from the earliest years and children’s early lives and experiences have been traditionally valued and funded by the state. Indeed, as neuroscience purported to explain why the early years were so important, in so doing, the case for early intervention and high quality early experiences for children, developmentally appropriate early education, and significant investment to secure these broad aims were strengthened (albeit that this strengthening was from within a particular positivist paradigm).

As such, this drawing together of disparate frames and agendas can be seen within *Right Start*:

“Until recently the ‘early childhood profession’ has failed to speak with one voice. Different groups have emphasised different arguments for improved provision, contrasting (for example) the needs of mothers with the benefits for children: or they

⁷² Even though educative researchers would dispute the notion that such periods were ‘critical’ as a strict following of the neuroscientific evidence reads.

have difference aims [however] modern educational research is on the threshold of a revolution. The findings of brain science for example, or the theory of multiple intelligence or the idea of different styles of learning are all pointing the way toward a new powerful theory of learning which will be able to satisfy the three tests of explanation, prediction and application” (Ball, 1994: 17; 23).

Despite the network’s careful efforts, as can be seen above, not to create a conflict between childcare for working women and the needs of children (indeed in many ways the harmonised agenda complements the equality of opportunities frame’s stress upon ‘high quality’ childcare provision), the tilting of the discursive attention towards children and the increasing importance of their early experiences did create discursive tensions in some quarters (as can be seen above within Labour’s ideas-tank, the IPPR). Moreover, despite efforts to generate a shared vision of EYEC, in practice the early years network remained divided over particular policy models, particular discursive emphasises and the way that policy should be justified – hence the development of a consistent, internally coherent policy vision for EYEC did not materialise which could offer government agents a single policy ‘magic recipe’.

In spite of this tension and despite the added ideational complexity that multiple sets of expertise, evidence and agendas creates within EYEC policy discussions, the combined effect of all these different rationalisations was to put significant ideational pressure upon both the incumbent and opposition governments to invest and fund EYEC in its various forms. Indeed whilst this ‘early years’ discourse was not stable or internally coherent, it had a wide spectrum of resonance with different sets of civil and political actors. However, as has been discussed earlier, the Conservatives appeared to be highly selective with the evidence that rationalised

early education – indeed there was a certain ambivalence and scepticism towards EYEC research, save for that which specifically appealed to existing agendas (such as reducing juvenile crime). In this way, ideas could not be seen to be actually shaping policy development; indeed the resulting policy was a limited experiment which indeed went in some ways contrary to what the experts were seeking and what the evidence rationalised.

As such, whilst the early years network had developed a powerful and persuasive ‘early years’ discourse and strong rationalisations for investment, thereby challenging and effectively subverting latent maternal care ideas and in so doing opening new (albeit potentially conflicting) paths for action, complementary institutional developments were occurring alongside Labour’s ongoing modernisation project. These would further aid the ascendancy of ‘early years’ ideas and lay the basis for a particular receptivity to EYEC evidence in Labour’s manifesto and subsequent policy agenda. In so doing, these ideal ideational conditions and Labour’s strategic response to these institutional developments would precipitate a period of openness in the policy space to evidence-based ideas; a contingent and unique period into which the ‘early years glitterati’ would move quickly to secure their discursive influence.

3. CHAPTER THREE: EYEC AND NEW LABOUR IN GOVERNMENT

3.1 Shifting institutional contexts of policy making: New Labour's modernisation programme, a response to New Public Management and the Treasury's turn to pro-active spending

In order to fully understand how a seemingly entrenched and therefore 'locked' institutional context of EYEC (and indeed welfare) residualism, where only a few educative researchers had limited access and influence, would subsequently come to be open to a confluence of 'early years' ideas articulated by external advocates and academics, it is first necessary to unpick and elucidate the underlying shifts in the institutional processes of policy making precipitated by the 'New Public Management' (NPM) reforms in the 1980s and early 1990s. Secondly Labour's response to these changes (and noted problems) and thirdly the ways in which particular discursive and concrete elements have been appropriated or opposed in formulating their modernisation programme and have hence channelled subsequent policy agendas and defined institutional workings. In many ways, Labour's ongoing modernisation programme, which symbolically culminated in the re-branding 'New Labour'⁷³, appeared to create the right conditions for a particular openness to external expertise and signalled the embryonic stages of a (re)emergence of an evidence-informed policy making process (Davies, Nutley and Smith, 2000: 20.). The New Labour project (in both an ambitious and a somewhat naïve way) attempted to forge an overall modernisation programme for both the institutions and practices of government which would seek to correct what they viewed as problematic tendencies in the context of existing New Public Management and previous 'ideological'

⁷³ And indeed was ongoing, as Wincott argues 'nearly a decade on New Labour remains a work in progress' despite signalling from Tony Blair that by rebranding Labour as 'new', the modernisation project was completed (2006: 288; Hay, 1999: 3.).

times; the prioritisation of efficiency over policy effectiveness and innovation; cost-containment over 'pro-active' spending; a closed, arms length attitude to evidence and research in policy making process rather than drawing in external expertise and ideas; a fragmented institutional system rather than joined up 'holistic' governance; and lastly to prioritise ideological ideas over 'objective' pragmatic solutions.

This emerging 'modernising' agenda would mark the appearance of a change in the temporal sequence of external evidence vis-à-vis policy making; from a sequence whereby expert research was often latterly commissioned in order to justify or support existing policy choices to one where (new) evidence and ideas would appear to drive and inform policy agendas with help from the broader academic community and other experts. In this way, as a key part of this modernising strategy, 'New Labour' would actively search for new policy ideas to define their 'modern' policy agenda, drawing upon external expertise to inform, rationalise and define their manifesto and not simply from conventional sources (at least conventional since the 1980s) such as think tanks. Such evolving conditions would provide an ideal strategic context for the various academics and advocates who were primed with such scientific ideas and positivist evidence, but also open the policy space up to broader ideas from those EYEC advocates usually marginalised from the policy process. Understanding how this process occurred from 'there' to 'here' is discussed below.

As mentioned above, Labour's modernisation programme, despite its discursive construction as 'new', signalled a return to, or a re-emergence to a privileging of academic expertise and policy evidence in the policy generating process. As Newman argues, the turn to policy evidence is not new and neither is particularly modern; there have been specific periods and

phases of modernisation previously, in which evidence has either been privileged or kept at arms length from the policy process (2001: 47-48.). Indeed, in many ways the ascendancy of external ‘evidence’ in policy making has come in waves. The 1960s are considered to be the last high point of a role for (academic) social policy research within government circles. Indeed with the development of the social sciences in the post war period, the production of organised knowledge about social problems became more institutionalised and a range of organisations conducting such research had rapidly grown (Davies, Nutley and Smith, 2000: 18.). Indeed particular social engineering ideas were circulating in academic communities (and borrowing from US studies) which purported to be able to engineer social and economic changes through social policy interventions. During this time it was routine for cabinet ministers to consult both formally and informally with academics on social policy issues⁷⁴ (Baldock, 2000: 127.). However, with the general disillusionment created in the wake of the apparent failure of programmes such as Head Start called into question the whole enterprise of creating social knowledge for direct use by governments (Davies, Nutley and Smith, 2000: 18.). Moreover by the 1970s social academics had begun to write strong critiques of Labour’s record and they appeared to lose their entrée through the portals of power (Baldock, 2002: 127.). During the 1980s the distancing of even dismissal of (academic) social research in social policy was particularly apparent with the rise of the New Right and New Public Management ideas.

The term New Public Management (NPM) appeared in the early 1990s in the academic literature to refer to the changes in public administration carried out in some Anglo-Saxon

⁷⁴ Even quite junior members of the LSE department found themselves on government committees, surrounded by ready listeners (Baldock, 2000: 127.).

countries during the 1980s (Torres, 2004: 99.). It is a slippery label in many ways as different conceptualisations of NPM all stress different things ⁷⁵(Dunleavy et al., 2006: 97.). However, the NPM can be broadly characterised as a series of trait policy interventions which sought to move bureaucratic processes away from the old system of ‘public administration’, which was considered bloated, rigid, hierarchical and over-centralised, had an absence of a performance culture and was inefficient (Lodge and Kalitowski, 2007: 5.). Instead the NPM model advocated a series of reforms that were designed to remake the public sector in the image of the private sector. Hence the NPM encompassed a new set of practices and values, a new language which emphasised efficiency, value for money, competition, markets and consumerism (Clarke, Gertwitz and McLaughlin, 2000: 6.). In many ways NPM tried to introduce a ‘bottom line’ mentality into the way government operated. Efficiency became the main goal, as private sector techniques were fastened on to the machine of government (Lodge and Kalitowski, 2007: 5.). In particular, the civil service was to undergo restructuring on the basis of performance management in which government employees had to become more accountable and performance-minded. Performance measurement regimes were installed and attempts were made to quantify government activity so that it could be effectively assessed (ibid.). This served to elevate the importance of ‘strategic management’ within government departments, which focused their attention onto the matters of cost management, to prioritise economic efficiency arguments in the use of public resources, the devolution of management control, contracting out of traditionally publicly provided services

⁷⁵ Indeed due to constraints of space I will not enter into a discussion of how the New Public Management arose through and interacted with broader neo-liberal ideas and indeed shaped the growth of private markets and broader welfare policy as with regards to EYEC policy its marginal status meant that it was not on the radar of the neo-liberal retrenchment project. Here I am principally concerned with the way that New Public Management agenda marginalised academic expertise and installed a business orientated practice to assessing policy.

and a sharper focus on (most often quantifiable) results of outcomes as opposed to qualitative processes (Ramia, 2002: 6.). The government's overall general distrust of the civil service (which had precipitated these NPM reforms) led to the rise of particular trusted think tanks which bypassed them and policy inputs were fed into the centre (Davies, Nutely and Smith, 2000: 19.). In this way, as departmental silos were stifled and entered into a defensive, competitive mode, so actual policy making gravitated towards the political centre. Indeed some commentators observed that these were particularly 'ideological' times (ibid.).

The sum total of these NPM reforms served to have a particular effect on government policy development and the government's relationship to evidence and expertise, especially that which was generated in the broad academic community. Indeed the focus of the government was to observe whether departments or their agencies were meeting specific targets and objectives, principally in relation to service delivery or economic targets. As such, by responding to these new 'management' imperatives, much less attention was given to effective and systematic evaluation of policy itself or indeed the search for 'good' policy within particular departments (Lodge and Kalitowski, 2007: 15; Painter, 2003: 212.). It led to what Jervis and Richards highlight as a 'development deficit' in public policy (1997, in, Newman, 2001: 59.). This referred to the limited capacity of the public sector organisations to innovate because of legislative and other restrictions constraining them from exercising the full strategic freedom that they would have in the private sector. Within the NPM 'managerial' focus the emphasis placed managing departmental 'efficiency' before departmental policy 'effectiveness' (ibid: 60.). Indeed, in such hostile 'managerial' circumstances and a central government tendency to draw upon the ideas of a few think tanks, the prospects for significant funds to be devoted to research and especially that which

involved the academic community were particularly limited. Indeed it is easy to see how the new emphasis on business-like efficiency did not particularly chime with the complex ideational style of academics analysing multifaceted problems and solutions – moreover those which were seeking to expand government social policy capacity or did not fit into neat departmental silos, as EYEC policy does not. In this way, the relationship between external expertise and government departments was in decline during the 1980s. Indeed, even the small ‘nursery education’ lobby appeared to lose their position within the DES and there were very few reports commissioned⁷⁶. Moreover, as has previously been discussed, during the voucher period external academics had difficulties engaging the Conservatives to develop policy with reference to their evidence and part of that problem was due to the hostility of DfEE to expansion (Randall, 2000: 96.). Summing up this trend, as the then Permanent Secretary for DfEE, Michael Bichard, stated, reflecting in 1999:

“The thing that surprises me is the way in which –over the last 20 years – the development of policy has not received much attention. Within Whitehall and beyond, all of the focus has been on the way we manage executive agencies. I think that the way we develop policy now needs a radical rethink... It should be research based and properly evaluated. It is about including more people in the development of policy. Whitehall has not been nearly creative as it needs to be” (cited in, Newman, 2000: 60.).

⁷⁶ To view a list of reports see Ball, 1994. Indeed since the Bruner enquiry there was a notable gap in commissioned reports with external academics and advocates and it was not until the late 1980s/early 1990s when enquiries began to be funded and not until 1996 when external research was actually commissioned, this being EPPE. Indeed the only route into the system for the education lobby was the parliamentary select committees.

Moreover, the then Permanent Secretary had once commented that the old Department of Education and Science was effectively a ‘knowledge free zone’ (Walker, 2000.). Such departmental tendencies in the context of NPM to remain inwardly focused and to prioritise departmental budgetary interests over solving broad policy problems were criticised by the left-wing think tank the Fabian Society, which suggested that the process of governing social policy needed more attention. As the Fabians stated:

“The whole system of government is riddled with specialism and departmentalism. Political reputations are made by civil servants defending departmental interests, safeguarding their budget and warding off intrusions from other fiefdoms” (Wicks, cited in Newman, 2000: 60.).

It appeared that NPM had served to make government departments focus upon managing (and in some ways hanging onto budgets) rather than developing and expanding policy and to be characterised by interdepartmental conflict and protectionism.

Parts of New Labour’s modernisation programme arose out of a response to these growing institutional issues and indeed were even being recognised latterly by the Conservatives themselves. Indeed, by the end of the 1980s the Conservatives felt the need to correct some of the fragmenting effects of their own reforms. In the early 1990s, Michael Heseltine began to talk of the need for partnership and launch a range of initiatives which encouraged joint working (Perri 6 et al., 2002: 14.). Moreover, as has been discussed, at the very end of the Conservative period the DfEE commissioned EPPE to give some relevant information on the

effects of different early years provisions with a view to informing subsequent policy initiatives. New Labour's modernisation programme would be an interesting mix of appropriated or opposing discourses; an evolving response to this existing institutional fragmentation and dominance of 'business style efficiency' over 'policy effectiveness', the general policy 'development deficit' and lack of innovation, and lastly a particular reaction to the 'ideologically' driven 1980s (from both ends of the political spectrum). Some of the concrete institutional issues would only begin to be dealt with on entering power (especially joint departmental working), but several of them would be taken up during opposition and in so doing open the space for external expertise and evidence, especially those which could articulate convincingly 'what [would] work' in the policy field.

Much academic debate has surrounded the issue of how to characterise and situate the 'New Labour' modernisation project within traditional ideological paradigms (Neo-Liberalism/Social Democratic) and newer ones such as the 'Third Way' and Social Investment⁷⁷ (Giddens, 1998; Hall, 2003; Hay, 1999; Prideaux, 2005; Legget, 2002). Some authors have assessed the extent to which New Labour's reform agenda has exhibited a conversion to a LEGOTM paradigm, where early childhood investments are an optimal response to new social risks (Jensen and Saint-Martin, 2006). Here is not the place to enter into an extensive consideration of which paradigm New Labour most closely exhibits in actuality. Suffice to say that much of this extensive discussion is drawn around the way in which New Labour, as a reaction to the ideologically driven 1980s, characterised their modernisation project as 'post-ideological'. As Blair stated:

⁷⁷ Indeed there are even more than this. For instance Deacon (2000) considers the New Labour approach as Anglicanised Communitarianism.

“We will be a radical government. But the definition of radicalism will not be that of doctrine, whether left or right, but of achievement. New Labour is a party of ideas and ideals but not of outdated ideology. What counts is what works (Blair, 1998, cited in Powell, 1999: 23.).

Moreover, for Blair ‘modernisation is about adapting to conditions that have objectively changed’ (1999, cited in Leggett, 2002: 424.). Within these two statements, it can be observed that New Labour appeals to a rhetorical transcendence of previous ideological divisions, a particular rhetorical appeal to ‘technical’ (almost ‘rational’) responses to evolving social and political changes and a favouring of ‘objective’ solutions to deal with them. In many ways, and as some commentators observe, this represents a ‘dogmatic pragmatism’ which neatly elides the apparent rejection of the traditional left (and historical left wing allegiances) and a systematic attention to traditional left wing concerns such as equality, defending the welfare state and systematic structural change (Lister, 2003: 428.). In this way, such ‘functionalism’ exhibits an underlying continuation or acceptance of neo-liberalism (or indeed capitulation to a neo-liberal hegemony) yet set within a more benevolent guise (Prideaux, 2005: 135; Hay, 1999.). However others consider there to be a more (genuine) normative commitment to an ‘a profoundly apolitical form of politics’ but which thus does not have an explicit political direction (Newman, 2001: 48.). Indeed as Blair’s statement above commits New Labour to ‘ideas’ but not ‘ideology’ and ‘whatever works’, these are

empty signifiers, which ideas are important and what counts as ‘working’ are not defined, nor definable without some overriding ideological set of values to use as a reference point⁷⁸.

For Andrews, as the New Labour modernisation project was explicitly centred around this ‘apolitical’ doctrine, this created an openness to new (policy) ideas, from outside of the normal Labour Party ranks, from both left and right (ideally with no fixed ideological abode) and involving a ‘Nexus’ of academics, policy makers and the business community (1998: 56.). Whilst this eclectic mix can therefore potentially create a particularly contradictory mix of external influences and would certainly make New Labour tend towards a particularly unstable, hybrid (or equally inconsistent, contradictory) political formation, this normative commitment to policy openness and a commitment to ‘modernisation’ developed from a profound dissatisfaction with existing politics; the sense that government institutions would be unable to deal with complex social problems and an awareness that an overt focus on an economic calculus of efficiency would preclude the development of effective policy (Newman, 2001: 173.). As think tanks such as the Fabian society had been feeding into New Labour, government departments and institutions were unable to innovate or develop policy having been stifled during the years of a ‘new public management’ ethos and a lack of research capacity within them. Hence each of these would need to be subject to a modernisation programme, as would existing public services, even typically sacrosanct institutions such as the welfare state. As Blair would assert during the first year of power ‘we say to business that it must be innovative... the same applies to government. Too often there is a fear of risk and change and experiment’ (1998, cited in Newman, 2001: 60.).

⁷⁸ Indeed some might argue that this is a deliberate abdication of ideological practice which masks an implicit conservatism.

In many ways, it appeared that despite obvious underlying tensions, New Labour wished to have its 'Third Way' cake and eat it. Indeed in practice, the New Labour project appeared to selectively appropriate particular NPM discourses, for example to 'root out waste and *inefficiency*' in public services and to subject them to managerial forms of audit and control, but yet similarly wished to create effective social policy (and hence potentially expand state capacity, especially in research areas⁷⁹) which would create specific policy outcomes, be that reducing child poverty, overcoming social exclusion or driving up education standards (Lister, 2003: 429.). New Labour's early discursive commitment to being 'objective' and 'outcomes focused' would however betray (or condition) a tendency towards privileging particular forms of expertise and evidence-based policy ideas in the policy generating process. Indeed, in many ways this discursive commitment tilts actor's attention towards considering those quantifiable, empirical and indeed scientific forms of evidence which have epistemological claims to 'objectivity' and 'neutrality'⁸⁰. In so doing, as Clarke, Gertwitz and McLaughlin identify, there was a potential tension between New Labour's preference for technicist,

⁷⁹ Indeed New Labour would follow through an early commitment to expanding the research capacity of government. The Department for Education and Employment had doubled its research budget by 2000 and Whitehall set up six dedicated centres within the universities, including the London School of Economics and Birkbeck College and a new Centre for Evidence Informed Policy and Practice at the Institute of Education. These were to collect together examples of "what works" among policy recommendations and ensure the message is conveyed to ministers (Walker, 2000.).

⁸⁰ Hence, it was not necessarily the case that by being 'outcomes' focused New Labour's policy preference would be determined by 'economic efficiency' but that which could 'measure' or model particular policy outcomes. For instance boosted attainment levels from attendance at early education; hence spending would be justifiable through returns of attainment increases in children. The question of what constitutes valid knowledge is a much broader issue; most social scientists would question claims to neutrality even within the realm of science and moreover the dangers of driving policy through on the basis of evidence which is still, even within the fields of science, essentially contested.

managerial solutions to the problems of welfare governance and its apparent commitment to a variety of social goals, including democratic renewal, equal opportunities and particularly in education (2000: 22.). Indeed, technical rationalisations, especially within social policy sit somewhat at odds with more traditional appeals to social rights and citizenship. Despite these tensions however, it was clear that more than usual, New Labour in opposition were open to influence from external expertise in the consultation process and as such the policy space would be subject to greater contingency.

A distinct and somewhat paradoxical development within the ideas of the Treasury would also lay an institutional basis conducive to the ascendancy of certain EYEC ideas and would latterly help shape the trajectory of policy development in EYEC. Indeed, despite the context of deep austerity, a Fundamental Review of Running Costs (FER, otherwise known as the Heywood review) became an opportunity for a major organisational appraisal and one which would turn the attention of the Treasury towards social policy issues and the idea of pro-active spending (Deacon and Parry, 2003: 108.). Such a development is surprising, indeed until 1990, the Treasury had an unimaginative view of social policy, it was seen as a source of insatiable demand that had to be restrained as much as possible but with limited hope of containment (Parry, 2003: 35.). However, as Deacon and Parry identified in their extensive study of the changing role of the Treasury, the Heywood review, reporting in 1995, would change this view (2000: 77.). Heywood was initially a typical efficiency exercise and programme review as had been carried out in the Thatcher years⁸¹, conducted by civil servant Jeremy Heywood and Colin Southgate, the former having been sent to Harvard Business

⁸¹ Although it is out of the scope of this chapter, most of Heywood was devoted to efficiency savings and a significant reduction in the number of overall Treasury staff (Deacon and Parry, 2000: 81.).

School to absorb new ideas of ‘best practice’ (Deacon and Parry, 2003: 108.). Out of this review came the idea of proactive spending and a new division within the Treasury. As the review reported: ‘without losing sight of their crucial public expenditure control responsibilities the Treasury’s expenditure division should be more prepared to think proactively about how their departments’ spending or policies should might be adapted or developed to strengthen the economy’ (Deacon and Parry, 2000: 77.). Here, an underlying human capital approach was forming where significant public increases could be justified within education and other ‘social areas’ in order to support the long term performance of the economy (ibid.). To this end, the new proactive spending division was charged with identifying ‘the potential interactions between spending of social security, employment and education’ (ibid.). As the then Treasury Permanent Secretary, Terry Burns stated ‘macro-economic policy is very boring... so we are getting very interested in social policy’ (cited in Fawcett and Rhodes, 2008: 95.). A small team of economists (Gill Noble, Peter Sedgwick and Norman Glass) were charged with investigating policies which would utilise public finance pro-actively to support human capital in the year leading up to the 1997 general election (Deacon and Parry, 2000: 80.). Hence, even in the most austere times and from a most unlikely base, was a potential opening in the bureaucratic structure towards external evidence and expertise which could articulate the economic and human capital benefits of EYEC.

3.2 A Moment of Open Space in the Policy Process: New Labour’s Early Years Taskforce

As has been discussed, by the early to mid-1990s, a confluence of particular ideational and institutional developments had created a tipping point of pressures against the status quo

position of state non-intervention within EYEC. As New Labour sought to define their manifesto priorities prior to the 1997 general election and to respond to these conditions and pressures, a contingent period of openness or space in the policy process was precipitated. The latent maternal care frame and private market model was under sustained attack from counter EYEC ideas articulated by the ‘early years network’ (and indeed from within the Labour party itself) and the developing knowledge and understandings of the importance of early years had added a rich ‘evidence base’ to the case for investing in EYEC and yet also a complex mix of different ideational/expert frames for understanding and conceptualising EYEC. Indeed, whilst this ideational complexity lent EYEC policy a wide spectrum of resonance with different New Labour actors, particular internal discursive tensions were arising between different EYEC frames and these were elaborating through early policy discussions. Indeed, in many ways this had always been the case, however the ‘early years’ networks efforts to layer rationalisation upon rationalisation and combine differently framed pieces of evidence into a rich ideational soup had exacerbated this trend. Divisions within the network persisted over which elements of an ‘early years’ policy were most important and implicitly how such policy should be justified⁸². In this way, the existence and persistence of multiple ideational frames for EYEC potentially opened up multiple paths for agential and policy action. Moreover, New Labour’s modernisation project spawned a variety of consultative initiatives, creating a particular openness to new policy ideas, precipitating a further element of contingency in the policy generating process.

⁸² As the previous chapter has outlined, child-centred and equal opportunities frames lean towards stressing rationalisations through concepts of citizenship rights whilst the ‘educative’, ‘social engineering’ and ‘neuroscience’ frames lean towards empirically positivist rationalisations.

One consultative initiative, known as the ‘early years task group’ was set up in 1995 in order to investigate proposals for early years services and childcare. The task group was chaired by Margaret Hodge, but was comprised of various New Labour party members, some of whom were in the shadow government, working on health, education and also those interested in childcare from a women’s issue perspective⁸³. Hodge had previously worked for Islington Council and had been closely involved in developing an early years centre⁸⁴ in the early 1990s which had begun to experiment with integrated services for young children and childcare (Hodge, 2007). The task group also comprised of many members of the ‘early years’ network, some of which who already had existing links with the Labour party but it also drew in a number of ‘early years’ advocates and academics who had previously been closed from mainstream policy debates (especially those working from a child-centred perspective). It was the task group who were responsible for feeding through EYEC research and policy ideas and models. The task group also spawned a network of regional and national meetings with the wider EYEC community (practitioners and voluntary and private EYEC providers) which was considered quite unusual (Pascal, 2006). As one member of the task group had observed, New Labour’s reluctance to exclude anyone from the process had perhaps opened up the consultative process too far, as particularly the private and voluntary sectors had wildly differing agendas. As such, there was a concern that not all interests could be reconciled with an effective overall EYEC strategy.

Within the task group it was clear early on that the Labour party, in line with their modernising agenda, were particularly interested in the evidence base behind early years

⁸³ In particular David Blunkett, the shadow minister for Education and Employment, Tessa Jowell from the shadow health and women’s issues and also Harriet Harman, Estelle Morris (Labour, 1996: 3.).

⁸⁴ The Margaret McMillan Nursery School, run by Mary Hart.

policies, as had been circulating through the Right Start reports and more broadly within DfEE, Select Committees and the Conservative party. As Chris Pascal, a member of the task force had noted, they had been very clear that they wanted to use evidence and ‘evidence-based’ policy making; not just at the policy formation period but wanted to utilise evidence in an on going manner, through the use of pilot programmes and ongoing research initiatives attached to these initiatives (2006.). Hence the early years network, primed with various rationalisations for investment and yet also broader child-centred arguments, made the case for state investment in EYEC. Clearly, New Labour had become receptive to this evidence and expertise as a particular discursive shift in the language of EYEC attests to. From previously conceptualising EYEC as simply either ‘childcare’ or ‘nursery’, a broader discourse emerged stating the importance of the early years for subsequent development. As the task force document, *Early Excellence: A head start for every child*, makes clear:

“The early years are critical to a child’s development. If we wish to promote equality and counter disadvantage, intervening at the earliest possible stage is essential... ensuring the best possible start for all our children whatever their background is central to the purpose of New Labour. It is central to our resolve to raise standards, to develop skills and to enhance opportunities in the successful and competitive Britain that we are determined to build” (Labour, 1996: 7; 3.).

No longer simply beneficial for children, drawing on neuroscientific rationalisations, early years provisions were now considered ‘critical’ to subsequent outcomes and the report makes

reference to particular ‘educative’ and ‘social engineering’ pieces of research to support the case for early intervention for subsequent outcomes⁸⁵.

At this early stage, *Early Excellence*, appears to reveal a mix of different EYEC policy rationalisations reflecting the multiple agendas and discursive rationalisations within the network. In places, EYEC is required to ‘meet the needs of young children... appropriate to the age and needs of the child’, ‘to give the best possible start to children academically and socially’, or ‘services which reinforce real choice and opportunity for parents’ (Labour, 1996: 9; 4; 2.). Out of this complex ideational soup however, emerged an idea for a pilot project which potentially offered a policy route to reconcile these different agendas.

‘Early Excellence Centres’ were proposed as an experimental initiative which would provide ‘a model of integrated early years services, bringing together on one site excellent early learning and high quality childcare facilities’⁸⁶(Labour, 1996: 9.). Such services would provide early education and care, from qualified nursery teachers and nursery nurses, alongside broader family support services and links to community health services, throughout the working day and year round (ibid.). The early years network were particularly excited by this proposal, which linked together the different agendas without sacrificing quality or one aim at the expense of another. Indeed, for some members of the network, it appeared that

⁸⁵ In particular High/Scope, the Peers Early Education Project in Oxford, and a Newcastle University Study on nursery education and readiness to learn (Labour, 1996: 4.).

⁸⁶ At the early stages it was suggested that some early excellence centres would pilot Chris Pascal’s Effective Early Learning Curriculum which was already being trialled but would be able to be subject to evaluation in order to measure the educative gains from the approach (Pascal, 2006). In a nod to the child-centred approach, it is suggested that early excellence centres should respond to local priorities and resources; to develop around and through the local community (Labour, 1996: 9.).

finally there had been a clear recognition within political circles of the necessity for the state to play an active and considered role in young children's lives and help families to reconcile care and work.

The overall government strategy on EYEC had yet to be fully developed however, and other policy proposals appeared to deviate from this single 'integrated' policy vision. Indeed, with significant pressure from the 'educative' camp within the network, *Early Excellence*, makes a commitment to address problems within the existing Conservative nursery voucher system. It suggests replacing the demand-side subsidy with a proposed early years 'partnership' with different early years providers, steered by local authorities so as to provide early education places for four year olds (with a longer aim of including three year olds) (Labour, 1996: 11-12.). It also proposes to improve early years 'cognitive' development through an early years curriculum and a requirement for qualified teachers to be involved in the planning and delivery of education services provided under the Early Years Development Plan (EYDP) (ibid.). Secondly, owing to the feminist pressure within the labour party, a separate 'national childcare strategy' was suggested alongside the other policy proposals, in order 'to enable parents to balance looking after their children with the imperative to work or retrain' (ibid: 15.).

As such, some members of the 'early years' network grew concerned that the overall coherence of New Labour's strategy on EYEC was in danger of separating out into distinct policy agendas driven by different rationalising frames and would ultimately lead to a fragmented system of EYEC. So concerned were some members of the network, that they contacted both David Blunkett and Harriett Harman to propose that instead of maintaining

three separate EYEC policy agendas that they perhaps spend six months thinking through the future of early years services and to develop policy in a coordinated fashion (Penn, 2007; Moss, 2007.). Clearly, the ability of multiple EYEC ‘frames’ to generate significant policy pressure had ironically become the Achilles heel of an integrated, effective policy model and split the agenda into three. Indeed, developing EYEC in England was not going to be as straightforward as it may have first seemed and a discursive instability in EYEC was already apparent. In this way, it appeared that particular EYEC frames would begin to jostle for ascendancy in the policy process. Indeed New Labour’s initial approach would actually serve to add to this complexity.

3.3 Complex agendas and multiple EYEC frames: New Labour’s early ‘scattergun’ approach to EYEC

The early period of the New Labour government’s policy endeavours within EYEC can at best be described as eclectic and at worst somewhat incoherent. Rather than heed the advice of some members of the early years task group, the government appeared to wish to race ahead with the development of EYEC services and many of these early initiatives appeared to be driven by different EYEC frames. As such, the resulting policies followed different trajectories. Indeed, despite the commitment to stay within the Conservative spending limits for the first two years of government, one of the first policy initiatives that New Labour announced on securing power in 1997 (as had been promised in *Early Excellence*) was the abolition of the Conservative ‘voucher’ experiment and a commitment to universal, free part time early years education places for four year olds (with the intention to extend these to three year olds) (HC, 1997.).

Clearly driven by an ‘educative’ agenda and, in part, a strategic response to the previous ‘vouchers’ experiment, the policy had been quickly drawn up by a civil servant within DfES, to extend nursery education places, initially using the £527 million utilised by central government for the voucher policy, returning this to the local authority Standard Spending Assessment so that local governments could draw up their Early Years Development Plans (EYDP) to provide places for every four year old by September 1998 (HC, 1997a). Subsequently, a ‘nursery education grant’ would provide money for local authorities to develop places for three year olds (initially through the maintained sector only) and ongoing places were funded through the Under Five’s Education Standard Spending Assessment sub block⁸⁷ (HC, 2000a.). By 2004, every three and four year old had access to a free place, for 2½ hours each school day (12.5 hours a week) (DfES, 2004: 29.). As had been proposed in *Early Excellence*, through the EYDP plans, the local authority would organise a ‘partnership’ between all providers of EYEC (the maintained, voluntary and private sectors) in order to generate these free part-time places. In part, the idea of a partnership organised through the local authority was to provide a mechanism to distribute government resources between potentially competing sectors to ensure collaboration and an equitable distribution of the funding cake (Bertram and Pascal, 1999: 54.)⁸⁸. However, central guidance through DfEE (latterly DfES), provided detailed annual planning guidance to ensure the ‘educative’ quality and accessibility of these places and indeed plans required the approval of DfEE before funding was allocated to meet the costs of these new early education places (ibid; 54-55.).

⁸⁷ Each place whether in the private voluntary or maintained sector would receive £1,170 to provide the place (HC, 2000).

⁸⁸ Indeed as a major criticism of the voucher policy was that it generated competition at the expense of expansion in places.

Early on, it appeared that the particular ‘educative’ quality conditions and the burden of administration which each provider was required to fulfil in order to be part of the EYDP plan, was putting pressure on providers, especially from the voluntary sector. Even as early as 1998, the government announced that it would provide £3 million to support ‘good quality pre-schools forced with closure’ (Cmnd 3959, 1998: 7.). The development of a new curriculum framework for the early years, the Foundation Stage (2000) (for children aged three to the end of the ‘reception’ year) and specific Early Learning Goals and curriculum guidance for early education providers for children under fives (QCA, 1999) would further increase the focus of publicly funded ‘early education places’ towards fulfilling ‘educative’ goals (Lewis, 2003: 226; Bertram and Pascal, 1999: 62.). Indeed the ‘Early Learning Goals’ set out prescriptively what children should be able to achieve by the end of the reception year when children would be subject to a Baseline Assessment (BREA, 2003: 21.). Although the early learning goals and Foundation stage went some way to recognise the different educational needs of children aged three to five and emphasised personal social and emotional development, play and outdoor provision⁸⁹, the requirement to fulfil specific learning objectives within literacy and numeracy created pedagogical tensions in this approach (Wandsworth, 2002: 57.). Indeed, an inspection regime managed by Ofsted of all pre-school settings offering early education places emphasised the importance of the quality of pupil learning experiences in literacy and numeracy⁹⁰ (BERA, 2003: 21.). Hence, understandably

⁸⁹ The Six areas of the curriculum were Personal, Social and Emotional Development Language and Literacy; Mathematics; Knowledge and Understanding of the World; Physical Development; and Creative Development (Bertram and Pascal, 1999: 74.).

⁹⁰ This was especially the case in England. Indeed the Scottish and Welsh curriculum guidance documents did not place the same emphasis on letter and number knowledge or specific leaning objectives as the English

practitioners put their efforts into teaching aspects of the curriculum for which they were held publicly accountable (ibid.). In this way, this policy appeared to be driven by an 'educative' perspective, as the requirements for 'early education' provision explicitly sought to raise 'educative' outcomes in the broader education system. Indeed as the government made clear, the test of the success of the approach would be 'better outcomes for children, including readiness to learn by time they reach school' ⁹¹(Cmnd 3959, 1998: 7.). In order to do this, the DfEE's EPPE project was already investigating the cognitive gains made by children in different pre-school settings and would make its final report in 2004 (Sylva et al., 2004.). Moreover, the policy was explicitly designed to be part-time (and therefore of no great benefit to working parents), reflecting the conceptualisation of these EYEC places as 'early education classes' which would necessarily be short in duration. As Margaret Hodge asserted, the policy was specifically designed for the places to be spread throughout the week, as whilst taking the free places in two days 'might be in the working Mum's interest, but it wouldn't be in the child's interest' (Hodge, 2007.).

The government made another early commitment which appeared to be driven by a different conceptualisation of EYEC (and driven by a different frame) and would deviate from an overall coherent policy approach. Owing to particular feminist pressure, especially from Harriet Harman, for a separate 'childcare' agenda, a 'national childcare strategy' was

document (Wandsworth, 2002: 57.). Indeed, the guidance is very specific: in the areas of literacy: to name and sound the letters of the alphabet; to read a range of familiar and common words and simple sentences independently; to begin to form simple sentences using punctuation; use their knowledge of phonics to write simple regular words (OECD, 2001: 115.).

⁹¹ Indeed a DfES target set in 2004 was to ensure that 50 per cent of children would reach a good level of development by the end of the Foundation Stage and the gap between the level of development reached by children in the 20 per cent most disadvantaged areas and other children will be closing (DfES, 2004: 29.).

announced in 1998, although the ‘childcare’ element did not appear to generate or command the same level of funding or policy development as ‘early education places’⁹². Indeed, whilst the National Childcare Strategy was launched with the 1998 Green Paper, *Meeting the Childcare Challenge*, and stressed the aim to ‘ensure good quality affordable childcare for children aged 0-14 in every neighbourhood’ in order to ‘offer equal opportunities for parents, especially women, and to support parents in balancing work and family life’ underneath the ambitious ‘equal opportunities’ discourse was a distinct lack of policy commitment and funding to enact this aim, especially for pre-school children or regarding the quality of childcare services (Cmnd 3959, 1998). It appeared that the government envisaged only a limited enabling role for ‘childcare’ (Wincott, 2006: 296.). The government would not itself develop provision but sought to draw upon existing provision in the private and voluntary sectors. To this effect the new Early Years Development *Childcare* Partnerships were given an extended remit to cover children 0-14, and the task of assembling information on childcare supply and demand (Cmnd 3959, 1998: 14.). Their remit (and supply of funding) was mainly focused at developing ‘out of school’ childcare places for school age children (from £325 million from a ‘New Opportunities Fund’ from the national lottery) to provide holiday schemes, before and after school clubs (Strategy Unit, 2002: 52.). The actual Childcare Grant (£561 million over five years) was mainly to cover staffing support to EYDCP’s, but included some limited funding for Children’s information services in local areas, childminder start up

⁹² Indeed between 2001/2 and 2003/4 the government allocated spending of £8.2 billion across all EYEC services, the bulk of which (£5.9 billion) was destined to establish, sustain and improve universal, free part-time educational provision for 3 and 4 year olds, whilst the Childcare Budget was only £561 million, with a further £325 funding for out of school activities for school age children (Strategy Unit, 2002: 10.). However, an estimated £725 million would also be spent on childcare through tax credits support to low income families.

grants and funding for pump-priming⁹³(ibid.). In spite of this limited funding, Penn and Randall calculate that childminding places actually decreased by some 60,400 places between 1997 and 2001 (2005: 80.).

Conspicuous in its absence, there also appeared to be little policy attention towards developing childcare for pre-school children and especially those under three years of age. Indeed, *Meeting the Childcare Challenge* makes no mention of developing early years childcare in the maintained sector, save for the separate part-time nursery education offer. Moreover, there appeared to be little policy attention (unlike early education) directed to the quality of childcare. As it was generally acknowledged childminder and nursery nurse's pay was notoriously low but the Green Paper hoped that establishment of a minimum wage could mitigate this (Penn and Randall, 2005: 81.).

Instead of generating significant supply or raising the quality of this supply, *Meeting the Childcare Challenge*, announced the creation of a new childcare tax credit (as part of the working families tax credit) which would provide help with childcare costs up to £70 per week for one child and £105 for two or more children who attended registered places (which included childminders, voluntary and maintained services) (Cmnd 3959, 1998: 14.). Such provision however was only tied to those who were in employment⁹⁴ (Lewis, 2003: 225.).

⁹³ A form of short term subsidy usually for provision in low income areas which gives financial support until they are established, after which they are assumed to become self-supporting businesses able to operate unsupported in the market (Cohen et al., 2004: 54.).

⁹⁴ And as Lewis argues created difficulties for those seeking to enter employment as the tax credit assumed that employment preceded childcare, whereas getting into work and arranging childcare is chicken and egg for the women involved (2003: 225.). Moreover, most of those at the lower income end would often seek to use informal care primarily. Some help would be provided through the New Deal for lone parents.

Overall therefore, by concentrating on funding demand rather than supply, New Labour perhaps expected that much of the expansion in childcare would continue to be primarily in the private sector. As Penn and Randall note, whilst New Labour claimed in its 2001 manifesto that it had created 300,000 extra childcare places (which was an aggregate total of nursery, out-of-school and childcare) much of this occurred in private nursery providers and actual childcare places were very low ⁹⁵(2005: 80.). This was not considered a problem where affluent areas could afford (or presumed to afford) the market costs of childcare. However it was apparent that the National Childcare Strategy was not generating places in disadvantaged areas (and hence would create significant barriers for poor parents to return to the labour market⁹⁶). With Treasury support (who increasingly viewed policies which aided labour market activation as contributing to poverty reduction targets), a remedial supply programme, the Neighbourhood Nurseries Initiative was launched in 2001, providing three years of funding to create affordable 45,000 childcare spaces, for a minimum of ten hours a day, within 20 per cent of the most disadvantaged wards (HC, 2005b; HC, 2004). Significantly, this was not simply a revenue project to subsidise places in existing day nurseries (although there was £243 million to support this). With £100 million from the New Opportunities fund and £28 million from Sure Start capital allocations, extra nurseries were built (or refurbished) (HC, 2004a). By August 2004, 1,279 nurseries had been created providing 45,000 places (HC, 2005b.).

⁹⁵ Penn and Randall suggest that the figure of 300,000 probably also includes early education places and 73,800 additional out-of-school places for school age children (2005: 80.).

⁹⁶ Indeed local authorities were advised to locate neighbourhood nurseries near major roads, on a 'travel to work basis' with the intention of attracting higher income parents who would take up non Neighbourhood Nursery Places for sustainability (Smith, 2007: 13.).

At this early stage, whilst New Labour's approach made a clear break from the past by abandoning the official policy of neutrality over maternal employment and going some way to recognise the costs of care, there was already a danger that 'care' appeared the poor relation to 'early education' policy. Despite significant feminist mobilisation behind getting childcare onto the government's agenda, as those academics looking at policy through a feminist perspective assert, gender equity appeared to be given a low priority, as neither were the needs of children in daycare places ⁹⁷ (Lister, 2003: 436.). Indeed, despite the introduction in 1999 of a National Framework of Qualifications in Early Years Education, Childcare and Playwork the training targets were low, set at NVQ level 2 for 50 per cent of any given workforce (ibid.).

The most promising policy initiative, the Early Excellence Centres programme, went ahead as had previously been promised, following the White Paper, "Excellence in Schools" in August 1997, to develop and promote models of high quality, integrated early years services for young children (from nought to reception) which would be responsive to local communities (Cmeduemp 33/302, 2001). Set up as a pilot the programme operated in three successive phases, and by 2000 a total of 29 had been developed (ibid.). A policy supported by the early years network and in many ways exhibiting a child-centred, holistic approach to EYEC, many of these centres were already in existence but were given 'Early Excellence Centre' status to

⁹⁷ In part, this was a consequence of the main demand side subsidy sitting within the Treasury, as markets were considered the best way to deliver services and although *Meeting the Childcare Challenge* was developed in conjunction with DfEE and Ministers for Women, the educative concerns over quality were taken up within the early education policy – there did not at this stage appear to be a clear conception within DfEE that in order to fully promote early education that the quality of surrounding care was also vital. Indeed, DfEE only just taken charge of day care on 1st April 1998 (previously it was held with the Department of Health) (HC, 1998)

demonstrate ‘good practice’ for EYDCPs⁹⁸ (Cohen et al., 2004: 74.). However, following the New Labour ethos, they were required to prove themselves. Alongside the pilot study was a National Evaluation Programme, funded by DfEE, to produce evidence that the centres were cost effective, improved development and learning (both cognitive gains and physically socially and emotionally) and had impacts on social exclusion, employment, health and social regeneration (Cmeduemp 33/302, 2001). In some ways an exemplar of the evidence-based policy approach, which sought to ascertain which particular elements of certain EEC’s were most effective before policy could be ‘mainstreamed’, the evaluation worked with a rather instrumental conception of outcomes which sat awkwardly with the holistic, child-centred ethos of the centres themselves.

Despite already having generated a pilot ‘integrated’ model of EYEC another early years policy initiative emanating from the Treasury would also promote an ‘integrated’ multi-agency policy for the early years, although unlike the EECs would be based on a different EYEC frame and thus draw from particular EYEC evidence and would therefore develop qualitatively different services. As had been described earlier, a small group of Treasury officials had been looking into pro-active spending policies which would support the human capital stock of the UK and had already become interested in the longitudinal studies from the US High/Scope and Head Start programmes which had produced results supporting investments in EYEC to support human capital and other macro social benefits (Glass, 1999: 259.). Hence the Treasury became actively involved (and indeed in many ways were the impetus behind) a comprehensive spending review carried out in 1997 which would take a

⁹⁸ As such Local Evaluation Reports would be produced by each centre to be fed into the EYDCP and Children’s services plan (Cmeduemp 33/302, 2001).

comprehensive look at the pattern and level of public spending; one of which was to review services for young children (ibid.). In one of the first New Labour commitments to ‘joint-departmental’ working, the review was chaired by Tessa Jowell, Minister for Public Health (acting independently), Norman Glass from the Treasury taking the lead in the review process including officials representing 11 different departments⁹⁹ (ibid.).

The purpose of the review to look at policies and services for children under eight with regard to available research evidence in regards to the factors that contributed to the risk of social exclusion, the effectiveness of early interventions and to make suggestions for action in the UK (Clarke, 2006: 703.). Indeed, in many ways it was already apparent that the review was already framed around ‘social engineering’ ideas (and perhaps reflected the Treasury interest in US programmes such as High/Scope and Early Start), which sought to ameliorate social and educational disadvantage and intergenerational transmissions of poverty for children at risk. Indeed, whilst ‘social exclusion’ was a relatively new term circulating in political circles, the idea that poverty, social disadvantage and social problems could be engineered away through social policy interventions had much deeper ideational routes (as has been discussed in the previous chapter)¹⁰⁰. The review process involved a wide range of practitioners (from health, social services, education), campaigning groups, academics, and as Glass had noted ‘it was evident that there was a considerable expertise in the policy

⁹⁹ Health, Education and Employment, Social Security, Environment and Transport, Region’s urban regeneration and housing, home office, the Lord Chancellors department, Culture Media and Sport, the Treasury (Glass, 1999: 259.).

¹⁰⁰ Although in part the term social exclusion was a reaction to the previous administration’s idea of an ‘underclass’ which had deeper moral undertones than the idea of the ‘socially excluded’ who were primarily a socio-economic category. In some ways the New Labour discourse was a muddle between the two see Clarke 2006.

community which was eager to play a part in the development of policy... and the way forward was to make as much use as possible of this expertise' (Glass, 1999: 260.). Hence the review held a series of seminars of 'what the research evidence said about what worked' (ibid.).

It was clear that during the review process, social engineering evidence and neuroscientific ideas had played a part in defining the review's agenda. Indeed as Glass asserted, the most important conclusions to emerge from the review was that 'the earliest years in life were the most important for child development and that very early development was much more vulnerable to environmental influences than had previously been realised' and that 'multiple disadvantage for young children was a severe and growing problem, with such disadvantage greatly enhancing the chances of social exclusion later in life' (ibid: 261.). As such, the review brief was narrowed to look at services for under fours (Clarke, 2006: 703.).

The conceptualisation of 'risk' appeared to be driven by social engineering ideas. Indeed a strict following of neuroscientific evidence conceptualises 'risk' through particular universal 'critical' time periods and universal physical categories such as low birth weight, however social engineering ideas prioritise socioeconomic and psychosocial profiles of risk (therefore rationalising a targeted approach) and defines particular macro social and economic benefits¹⁰¹. As Tessa Jowell stated (and perhaps reflecting her own social work practice

¹⁰¹ And indeed on the flip side the consequences of non-intervention within the early years. In some senses these social engineering ideas would have a particular effect upon the way that New Labour would conceptualise social exclusion which exhibits a tension between a moral discourse framed around a lack of 'cultural preparation' perpetuating poverty or socioeconomic structures limiting opportunities and that a lack of social and economic 'goods' perpetuated social exclusion and poverty.

background), the overall rationale for re-shaping children's services was to 'give best value to children but we can also get value for money by cutting the costs of crime and unemployment which can so easily follow if children do not get help at an early stage' (1998, cited in Parton and Pugh, 1999: 230.). The idea was that by providing help to the parents in their child's early development (within both their health and their cognitive development and pre-natally) this would enable children to realise their potential within the education system hence avoid outcomes that are seen as the consequences of educational failure, including crime, unemployment and teenage pregnancy (Clarke, 2006: 699; National Audit Office, 2006: 6.). As a social engineering ideas prescribed, such micro solutions would potentially alter macro social and economic structures and could therefore contribute to New Labour's broader aim of ending child poverty; indeed, just as economists in the US from the 1960s had asserted could be the case then.

The policy programme to eventually emerge from the review, Sure Start, reflected this particular dual frame of social engineering and neuroscientific expertise. Set up initially as a pilot, with £540 million ring-fenced within DfEE over three years to provide 250 centres and with its own cross departmental unit, the Sure Start Unit¹⁰², Sure Start was announced in July 1998 as multi agency programme 'to provide comprehensive support for pre-school children who face the greatest disadvantage. It will include childcare and play, primary health care, early education and family support'¹⁰³ (Blunkett, HC, 1998a). In this way the programme had

¹⁰² Which was headed on an interim basis by a member of DfEE until Naomi Eistenstadt was recruited to head the unit.

¹⁰³ Only some of these services would be free however, in particular the childcare (as opposed to early years play sessions) that Sure Start Centres provided would be paid for by parents, although theoretically the Child Tax Credits would cover most if not all of the costs for working low income families. However the audit office found

five main objectives: to improve social and emotional development, to improve health, to improve the ability to learn, to strengthen families and communities and to increase the productivity of operations (Sure Start 2001, cited in Evangelou and Sylva, 2003: 33.). Framed through social engineering ideas, such programmes would be targeted¹⁰⁴ with the first 60 trailblazer districts identified as having significant local deprivation. A Sure Start Local Programme would convene a partnership to apply for Sure Start funding to improve and extend services in each area (HC, 1999). In practice, each Sure Start Local Programme had some freedom to determine what services were provided around the core objectives, and services could include; childcare, crèches, speech and language development, toy libraries, baby massage and play sessions, pre and post natal classes and other health checks and education training and employment services (National Audit Office, 2006: 6.). In keeping with the ethos of the policy and drawing from neuroscientific ideas of the importance of foetal development and the importance of supporting maternal nutrition, the Chancellor also announced in 1999 a Sure Start Maternity Grant (which from 2002 was £500) for those on income related benefits and Working Families Tax Credits (HM Treasury, 2001: 17.). The 2000 spending review extended the programme to over 500 local programmes by 2004, reaching one third of poor children under four in 524 centres (Clarke, 2006: 704.).

Similar to the Early Excellence Centres, Sure Start would be subject to a rigorous evaluation programme (running from 2001 to 2008) and was required to meet particular Public Service

that Sure Start Centres by charging broadly market rates found that the care was still too expensive for disadvantaged families (National Audit Office, 2006: 22.).

¹⁰⁴ Although targeted to area rather than taking the more potentially stigmatising option of profiling the clientele who could use these services.

Agreement targets¹⁰⁵. The National Evaluation of Sure Start (NESS) would look in stages at outcomes in child social and emotional development, cognitive and language development, physical health of children and maternal psychological well being (NES, 2004: 6.).

As such, in the first wave of EYEC reforms, distinct agendas and policies framed and orientated through different forms of expertise and ideas led to a scattergun approach to EYEC policy. Indeed, many of the early reforms enacted by New Labour highlighted the conceptual differences (even confusion) within different areas of government over the relative importance of the early years for future outcomes; which groups of children and at which ages should be subject to government intervention and whether they should be subject to early education or simply care. For a government which had so clearly stated its intention to implement 'joined-up working' and 'joined-up-solutions' it was some what ironic that behind the scenes, with particular policy agendas driven by different political agents seeking to establish a name for themselves, the approach could rather better be described as joined-up fighting¹⁰⁶. Moreover, it served to highlight the potential pitfalls of a purported 'evidence-based' based policy agenda. Indeed, even if political agents actually aim to model policy on evidence (rather than utilising it as a justificatory strategy) there is a danger that where multiple evidence-based frames become embedded in different policies (as was the case here)

¹⁰⁵ The Public Service Agreements were gradually increased over the years but included reductions in numbers of children aged 0-3 who are re-registered on the child protection register; reductions in mothers who smoke; reduction of numbers of children with speech and language problems requiring specialist intervention by four; and latterly to ensure that 50% of children reached a good level of development at the end of the Foundation Stage and reduce inequalities between the levels of development achieved by children in the 20% most disadvantaged areas and the rest of England (see National Audit Office, 2006: 17.).

¹⁰⁶ In particular, with Margaret Hodge backing the importance of early education, Harriet Harman protecting a childcare agenda and Tessa Jowell seeking to establish Sure Start as a mainstream policy programme

EYEC discourses become unstable, fragmented services arise, precluding an overall coherent agenda.

What appeared striking was that despite the government's rhetoric, as Gordon Brown stated, 'Our aim is that every child should have the best possible start in life', most of policies enacted in the government's first wave of programmes did not appear to be designed around the present needs and wellbeing of children (HC 1999a). Indeed, the implication of the two main policy programmes split between sessional early education places and rather weak, privately dominated childcare market, was an inability for all services to link harmoniously. It was not always the case that places that provided early education could cover time periods in which parents were working and hence parents would need to organise packages of childcare around the free early education (be that a childminder or at another venue). Whilst this was not particularly helpful to the parents it would also not be in the best interests of children (despite the rhetoric that part-time sessional places would be in the interests of children so as not to overload them). Moreover by stressing the particular prescriptive outcomes which EYEC policies were required to achieve in order to be worthy of investment and by defining targets on the basis of macro societal outcomes and cognitive gains within formal literacy and numeracy, these policies were in danger of treating children instrumentally. There also appeared to be a distinct split between how government policy conceptualised and treated different age groups; with state provisions for early intervention being defined (through a social engineering frame) by categories of social and economic risk, whilst for those aged three and above state provision was provided on a universal basis. For those working from a child-centred perspective, this fragmentation in policy would have the potential to adversely affect the children to which policy was directed and ironically counter-

act the intentions of the government to realise the full potential of every child. It may have been expected that at this stage with departmental and ministerial interests in particular EYEC policies that the prospects for this scattergun and instrumental approach to be challenged would be limited. However, two scrutinising functions, the Select Committee on Education and Employment and the OECD's thematic review of ECEC would offer a space in which child-centred ideas and the early years network could potentially challenge the orthodox view of EYEC.

3.4 Dissenting Voices: the Select Committee on Education and Employment and the OECD

The Education Sub-Committee announced on the 28th July 1999 its intention to carry out an inquiry into Early Years Education (from birth to eight years of age¹⁰⁷) and the various initiatives that government had enacted since 1997 (Cmeduemp 33/301, 2001). It offered once again, an opening for the early years network to engage with the current policy initiatives and whilst not all were invited to be specialist advisors, many gave evidence. Particular influence from Peter Moss had steered the committee to undertake a field trip to Denmark (where a particular pedagogical tradition and state investment make one of the most comprehensive integrated systems of EYEC in the world). Indeed the Committee's report was extremely comprehensive and thoroughly engaged with existing evidence (both scientific and qualitative cross comparative), practitioner's opinions, and those of other early years experts. What emerged from the Select Committee was a well developed counter-voice to prevailing government ideas about EYEC and which exhibited a particularly child-centred

¹⁰⁷ The inquiry had originally been charged with investigating early years education for children between 3 and Year 1 of primary school, but in the course of the investigation it was clear that the very early years were important also.

approach. In particular, the Select Committee recommended a national model of integrated early education, care and community support services along the lines of the Early Excellence Centres pilot which had sought to demonstrate that the key to enhancing child development (upon which all anterior macro social, economic and educative objectives ultimately rested) was through policies which enhanced children's wellbeing and attended to children's and families needs holistically¹⁰⁸. Indeed, the Committee challenged the prevailing formal, Anglo-Saxon approach to early education alongside the low status and qualified childcare sector, seeking to instead promote the social pedagogical approach. As the Committee report asserts:

“we were impressed in Denmark by the standing of the ‘pedagogues’ who are well trained professionals working with children in early years settings...both written and oral evidence expressed an overwhelming concern with the training and the quality of people working in Early Years settings” (Cmeduemp 33/301, 2001).

As a start, the Committee report notes ‘teaching in the early years demands particular skills in educators which go beyond the direct transmission of knowledge’ and the government should ‘reconceptualise early years education and care as being about learning in the a much wider sense’ moreover ‘recognising that learning begins at birth, it does not begin at three’ (ibid.). As a beginning the Committee recommended that the ‘years from birth to five should be viewed as the first phase of education’; ‘that children below compulsory school age should be

¹⁰⁸ Indeed the National Evaluation of Early Excellence Centres was subject to a cost benefit analysis which found that early intervention for children with special needs leads to greater likelihood of the child being successfully integrated for compulsory education in mainstream school, a saving for £7,000 per child-year hence £1 invested would save £8 on alternative sources (Bertram and Pascal, 2000).

taught informally in ways that are appropriate to their developmental stage and interests’; ‘that DfEE should foster the creation and development of a ladder of training for Early Years Practitioners which could lead to a graduate qualification equivalent to that of qualified teachers’ (ibid.). There was even some debate, on the basis of cross comparative education studies which supported results from existing developmental psychology studies, that a later school starting age (age 6 or 7) would be beneficial, provided that school is preceded by high quality pre-school provision (ibid.). As the Committee noted:

“skills such as reading, writing and maths require teaching, but there is no convincing evidence that teaching these skills early (before six) is advantageous... well resourced preschools that encourage the development of emotional, cognitive, social skills and feelings of self efficacy through natural activities such as play and exploration result in lasting social and educational benefits, especially for children from deprived backgrounds”

In this way, whilst the Committee recognised the rich evidence base which had led to the development of Sure Start, the Committee noted that it was ‘not so much an education and care initiative but an integration of care and health services’ (ibid.). Indeed within the minutes of evidence, Gillian Pugh suggests that ‘we need to look at the quality of children’s learning and make sure that Sure Start is fully docked in... Sure Start will only be effective if it becomes a mainstream strategy... it will only work if the lessons we learn from working in new ways with children under three are consistent’ (Cmeduemp 33/302, 2001.). To bring the different policies together the Committee recommends ‘since education and care are

inseparable, there should be a universal service under the leadership of a Single Government Department' (Cmeduemp 33/301, 2001).

The DfEE's decision to participate in the OECD's thematic review process (1998-2001) also added to the critical voices of England's fragmented system. I shall analyse the development of the OECD perspective on EYEC in more detail in chapter six. There I investigate the (impact of) the emergence and circulation of ideas related to EYEC within the OECD as an example of the role of the international level in policy change. OECD perspectives shared with the Select Committee¹⁰⁹, seeking to steer England's EYEC policy towards a child-centred frame (owing to particular links to the early years network) and many of the recommendations echoed the Select Committee's concerns over the lack of a comprehensive early years strategy from birth, the 'schoolification' of early years education and the need for a central Ministerial lead for Children (OECD, 2000: 31; 41; 45). The OECD added a questioning of the 'dominance of a rather narrow and technical research paradigm' to the debate (OECD, 2000: 46.). Indeed the OECD urged the government to 'develop knowledge of other perspectives and approaches, through cross national research, insights from post-modernism, feminist post-structuralism and critical race theory which could offer alternative frameworks for understanding social change, intransigent social problems that impact on early childhood and education outcomes' (ibid: 47.). Moreover, by taking an overall cross national perspective, the OECD were in a position to demonstrate that comparatively public expenditure as a proportion of GDP was low in the UK (along with other 'liberal' welfare states) comparing to continental European countries in the middle and the Nordic countries

¹⁰⁹ Indeed there were many links between the actors involved in compiling the background report and the Select Committee. In particular Chris Pascal, a specialist advisor to the Select Committee, co-authored the background report for the OECD and the early years network were broadly connected to the OECD's work.

which generally spent the highest proportion¹¹⁰ (OECD, 2001: 86.). As Margaret Hodge, stated giving evidence to the Select Committee ‘we were very concerned, if you look at OECD comparative figures, that we probably invested less than any other country in the early years’ (Cmeduemp 33/301, 2001).

3.5 The second wave of EYEC policy: The move towards an integrated, child centred policy model?

In the context of significant external and internal (critical) interest in EYEC policy initiatives and indeed the recent policy activity across various government departments (not to mention the particular interest from the Treasury), two main developments would precipitate attempts to develop an integrated EYEC system and back this with greater spending. Firstly, under the auspices of the Treasury and Strategy Unit it was announced in October 2001 that a second Interdepartmental Review of Child Care would take place, led by Baroness Ashton, in order to inform the 2002 Spending Review (Strategy Unit, 2002: 63.).

The review develops a particular ‘employment and poverty’ rationalisation of EYEC which betrays influence from the Treasury. Indeed, alongside the long term Sure Start project, increasingly policies which aided labour market attachment were viewed as contributing to reducing poverty levels. As it states ‘new investment is particularly required to support the

¹¹⁰ Gathering reliable comparative data on EYEC was complex as recognised by the OECD as the multitude of different EYEC services and different starting ages for school made comparison difficult. However, purely referring to pre-primary education (organised centre-based pre-school programmes) Denmark spent 0.85% GDP on early education with the UK spending 0.4% (OECD, 2001: 87.). These figures were for 1998 and caused some frustration for UK Ministers with the publication of the consolidated report in 2001, as these figures did not account for the large increases in spending on early education from 1998-2001.

Government's lone parent and child poverty targets' (ibid: 6.). The review also retained the technical, evidence-based approach that the previous comprehensive spending review had taken in order to rationalise EYEC policy, accounting for the 'impacts on child development, educational attainment and labour market outcomes later in life' (ibid: 64.). Drawing upon ongoing EPPE, Early Excellence Centre and US data, the review concluded that 'evidence supports investment in good quality, integrated childcare for pre-school in low income families...[it] also suggests that there are long-term educational outcomes which persist [and] there are other benefits: reduction in crime rates, improved health outcomes and attitudinal outcomes' (Strategy Unit, 2002: 29.). On the basis of this evidence and in order to realise these 'outcomes' the review proposed a doubling of investment in childcare by 2005/6 ¹¹¹ to be held in a combined budget with a new interdepartmental unit. As the review noted, the current funding streams (with a plethora of short term grants) were particularly complex for local authorities to negotiate (ibid: 52.). Recognising that there were too many uncoordinated programmes and that EYEC policy to date had not sufficiently 'joined-up', the review proposed, in order to produce an integrated overall strategy, that 'responsibility for Sure Start and for early years education and childcare needs to be brought together at the centre, with a clear Ministerial lead' (ibid: 54.).

This latter proposal, which resulted in Margaret Hodge being appointed as the first Minister of State for Children within DfES, in 2003 with full responsibility for children and young people would mark a particular turning point in EYEC policy and specific attention towards child development. Margaret Hodge had become something of an early years champion within the government and was particularly interested in the child development and learning

¹¹¹ By 2005/06 the combined budget was expected to be £1.5 billion per year (Strategy Unit, 2002: 6.).

aspects of EYEC (Hodge, 2007). As some commentators asserted this ‘marked the emergence under New Labour of an explicit, universal and child centred family policy’ (Williams and Roseneil, 2004: 184.). Whilst, Margaret Hodge’s approach was initially more ‘educative’ the engagement with child centred ideas was noticeable in her tenure as minister. Indeed, although the idea of integrated ‘Children’s Centres’ were first announced from the Interdepartmental Review, when giving evidence to the Select Committee earlier, Hodge had stated the intention to try to ‘get an integrated service, across care, education and health with the Sure Start programme and the Early Excellence programme’ (Cmeduemp 33/301, 2001). Indeed the policy was fully elaborated within the 2004 Ten Year Strategy for Childcare and Five Year Strategy within DfES, of which Hodge had significant input into both (Hodge, 2007; Treasury, 2004; DfES, 2004.).

Children’s Centres were the government’s main attempt to respond to the fragmented EYEC system that had developed in the first wave of reforms and indeed draw lessons from the evidence and contributions from both the Select Committee and to a lesser extent the OECD. They were initially a re-branding of Sure Start, Early Excellence and Neighbourhood nurseries, however, a key development was the mainstreaming of all different services to provide a ‘one-stop-shops’ or hubs for parents and children, offering early education and childcare, family support, health services, employment advice and specialist support (DfES, 2004: 22.). Moreover, going some way to recognise the importance of a seamless day for young children for their wellbeing and development, the policy recognised that ‘particularly in the earliest years, children learn through play and exploration and making an artificial distinction between education and care is unhelpful’ (ibid.). As such, Children’s Centres would provide ‘educare’ combining care with early education, where the strict timetable for

early years education sessions were relaxed (although not entirely) so as to develop a more integrated play-based day rather than ‘early years lessons’ (ibid.). It was expected that all Children’s Centres managers would attend a one year integrated leadership programme with a long term vision to ensure that these full daycare settings would be led by graduate qualified early years professionals ¹¹²(HM Treasury, 2004: 45.). To develop the quality of early years workers, the government introduced first the framework document *Birth to Three Matters* which provided a set of resources to help those caring for babies and toddlers (DfES, 2004: 24.). This would latterly be superseded by the introduction of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) covering children from nought to five (DfES, 2004: 24; DCSF, 2007: 167.). Divided into sub-categories of age group and recognising the importance (and equal footing) of play and social and emotional development (if still somewhat prescriptive still on literacy and numeracy) EYFS became statutory within all settings offering provision for children aged 0-5, including day nurseries, pre-schools, playgroups, childminders and maintained and independent schools so as ‘to ensure that children receive the same high quality experience whatever type of setting they attend’ (DCSF, 2007: 167.). Whilst this maintains government commitment to ensuring quality across both early education and childcare, Children’s Centres with direct government funding would have higher levels of trained staff (indeed full daycare settings would be able to draw upon a Transformation Fund to recruit graduates to become full Early Years Professionals), whilst private and voluntary sessional providers and childminders are not required to have beyond NVQ level 2 (with the DfES strategic plan 2006 stating that by 2008 transformation funds would be used to develop a higher proportion of providers at NVQ level 3) (DfES, 2006: 78.). Without equitable wages and qualifications it

¹¹² The latter Department for Children Schools Families (DCSF) report outlined that full day care settings would be led by a graduate by 2015, with two graduates per setting in disadvantaged areas (2007: 86.).

will remain to be seen how many of these latter providers will be able to implement this plan and negotiate this complex EYFS framework.

There were also changes at the local level with EYDCP's being replaced by Children's Trusts (by 2008 all LA's would have one), which gave more statutory power to local authorities in the provision of children's services and integrated planning and commissioning with pooled budgets (ibid: 26.). In this way, Local Authorities would be able to make decisions on how money was spent (and how funding would be divided between different providers). Whilst this gives power to the local areas, there was a danger that with devolving power and suspending the ring fencing of funds once they run out¹¹³, that less committed local authorities would be able to cut specific services (for example outreach work) if funds became tight. The latter Childcare Act of 2006 which placed a statutory duty on local authorities (from April 2008) to provide sufficient childcare went some way to condition local authority spending, although as Margaret Hodge feared, the commitment to quality and protecting specialised services could potentially be lost (HC, 2008; Hodge, 2007.).

Despite these administrative tweaks the Children's Centres policy initially appeared to not only introduce for the first time in England a child-centred integrated strategy but also a commitment towards universality. Indeed the interdepartmental review had committed funding to deliver 2,500 Children's Centres in the most disadvantaged areas and the Ten Year Strategy extended this commitment to 3,500 centres by 2010; as the government proudly declared 'one Children's Centre in every community' (Treasury, 2004: 36.). By now a clear

¹¹³ The Sure Start Local Programmes were ring fenced for ten years so many are coming to the end of the funding regime.

flagship policy of the New Labour tenure, the headline policy developments appeared increasingly to demonstrate the government's commitment to children and to appear to be directing EYEC policy towards a child-centred model. Whilst New Labour's commitment to generate a new area of social policy is commendable, digging a little further into the implementation of the policy reveals a slightly different (policy) story and indeed can be explained by the pervasive influence of social engineering and educative frames which have served to temper the overall child-centred universal vision.

Within the appendices of the Ten Year Strategy, the evidence and expertise from which the plan draws are outlined. By this time EPPE was reporting outcomes from the longitudinal study which had found that high quality integrated settings achieved better cognitive outcomes than alternative provisions, that children who attended pre-school at two years old were 10-12 months ahead (cognitively) of those who had not and had better scores of independence, concentration and sociability, whilst for very young children there were mixed impacts (HM Treasury, 2004: 65-67.). However the report also makes (somewhat conflicting) citing of the Early Head Start programme where a randomised control found improved cognitive, behaviour and health outcomes for young disadvantaged children (ibid: 69.). On the basis of these two sets of evidence (drawing on respectively educative and social engineering ideas), very early education was a benefit for those profiled by risk whilst for the majority of children, there were no particular benefits. This split in the evidence base was encapsulated in the government's commitment to not purely universal services but 'progressive universalism'; 'support for all and most support for those who need it most' (ibid: 4.). This idea was elaborated in the Children's Centres Plans. Indeed, despite making a commitment to universal Children's Centres, it appeared that only those Children's Centres in

the 30 per cent of disadvantaged areas which will be required to provide the gold standard 'integrated educare' that would provide for services for five days a week, 48 weeks of the year (Moss, 2006: 167.). In the 'Children's Centres light' (as Moss himself referred to them) there would only be a minimum requirement to provide information and links towards other services (such as early education and childcare, health services and employment advice) retaining only the core 'drop in early years play sessions' and family support (National Audit Office, 2006: 14; DfES, 2006: 23.). In these more affluent areas it is presumed that the private market will be able to fill the need for childcare and moreover that it is only those young children deemed at risk who require and benefit from integrated EYEC. Similarly EPPE evidence was utilised to rationalise new EYEC policy. Indeed, with reference to EPPE evidence the spending review announced a pilot would be set up to provide free part time early education for 12,000 two-year olds (beginning in disadvantaged areas in 2008) and the government extended the free 12 ½ hours entitlement 15 hours by 2010 with a longer term goal of 20 hours per week ¹¹⁴(Treasury, 2004: 53; HC 2005).

In this way, whilst the government has clearly committed itself to making policy based upon evidence, it is the 'scientific' or hard empirical evidence which appear to have gained ascendancy in the policy making process and in this way has set limits to the consideration of alternative forms of expertise and ideas. In so doing, this has precluded the ascendancy of child-centred and equal opportunities ideas and as such development of a fully integrated child centred policy model as appears in some Nordic countries. Moreover, as New Labour's EYEC policy model has developed, it is only early education which has secured the

¹¹⁴ Although the policy has been carefully regulated to ensure that these free early education places are spread over three days or more (HC, 2005).

commitment of government resources and which has been socialised by the state. Early years care on the other hand, is still the weaker policy and still relies to a great extent upon parental funds¹¹⁵. Even within full Children's Centres, early education and intervention policies are free whilst the 'care' elements (the price of the hours over and above the free 'early education' entitlement) are funded by fees (which for some are subsidised by tax credits). In this way, unlike a fully child-centred vision the places are not provided on the basis of children's needs and to a great extent rely on parental employment. In so doing, the policies do not fully address gender equity concerns. For the most part, parents with children under three will still be required to shoulder the majority of costs and most children will be cared for within private childcare services; hence many women will struggle with the increasing costs of childcare. As Beverley Hughes, the Children's Minister (2005-2009) comments on the fact that in 2006 private and voluntary sectors made up 81% of full day care places and 90% of sessional places:

“That is good; it is what we want to see. Public sector provision is not driving private and voluntary sector providers into the ground—quite the opposite is true. The money that we have put in has allowed that sector to grow, and that is very important.” (HC, 2006).

¹¹⁵ Although not strictly an early years policy, the 'Extended Schools' programme (developed in the 10 Year Strategy) committed money to develop childcare and after school activities which by 2010 would mean all schools would provide parents with children aged between 5-11 a guarantee of 'affordable' childcare between 8am and 6pm all year round, either on site or in a partnership between voluntary and private sectors, including childminders. The expectation is for such services to become 'self-financing' however through charging (HC 2005a).

There is also the question of what will happen when the ring fenced funds for the Sure Start programme run out. Whilst major injections of funds were committed during successive spending reviews, the 2007 budget committed a relatively modest increase in funds for early years services¹¹⁶. It may be the case that the government expects that with funds injected to establish EYEC places, that with supply funding for low income families (which in 2007 was increased to 80% of costs up to £300 p/w, £175 for one child) alongside early education provision, EYEC will become self-financing (Treasury, 2007: 113.). Yet the prospect of a fully integrated, universal EYEC service to develop without the continued investment substantial public funds is limited. Indeed, where Sweden and Denmark currently invest around 2 to 2.5 per cent of GDP on EYEC, even with the significant increases in public spending, the UK only spends some 0.5% of GDP (in 2005) (HC, 2005c). An EYEC service which attends to the holistic needs of children does not come cheap and requires substantial state subsidy, otherwise costs will be prohibitive, stratify children's opportunities and the quality of such services will inevitably suffer. Yet if neuroscientific evidence is correct and lends some 'scientific' weight to the child-centred approach that some countries have already developed, then investment in a universal EYEC system is essential and should be the first pillar of an effective welfare state and education system.

In conclusion, as this chapter has sought to describe, England has made a particular and in many ways historic commitment to EYEC policy. Indeed, when all the different policy initiatives are considered together, the scope and scale of change to the English welfare state is undeniable. Tracing the development of EYEC policy shows that in some areas of the

¹¹⁶ The 2007 budget announced increases in funding for Sure Start, childcare and early years of £340 million by 2010-11 (Treasury, 2007: 113.).

welfare state, expansion not retrenchment has been the order of the day. However, as I have sought to describe, there was no inevitability that as women entered the labour market in vast numbers that the agency of government would respond (or indeed respond in optimal ways) to such material changes to the social structure. Indeed, as has been shown, EYEC policy, as it has developed over the last ten years has not fully engaged with the social risks created by a lack of adequate childcare, nor particularly addressed gender concerns. Instead EYEC policies have been mainly developed in order to fulfil broader macro social, economic and educative goals. In this way, welfare states do not simply respond to material incentive structures, indeed this process is highly mediated by the political process; hence not just actors and institutions matter, but discourses, ideas, scientific theories, representations and, in general, knowledge (Gottweis, 2003: 256.). In order to understand how EYEC policy has developed in England and the qualitative texture of services that have been concretised in policy, particular attention has been given within the analysis to the ways in which particular persuasive yet competing EYEC frames have arisen in political and policy circles, destabilising the existing established maternal care ideas and which have subsequently fought for ascendancy in the policy process. Moreover, the specific interplay between these ideational frames and the institutions and practices of government which have, over time, increasingly privileged particular forms of evidence in the policy making process. As I have sought to describe, the ability of early years academics to articulate the need for such services with reference to a variety of different evidential bases, discourses and indeed most importantly through the language of science, has both aided its ascendancy within the highest political circles but unfortunately precluded the institutionalisation of a fully coherent and integrated EYEC system. Indeed, particular frames stress different (policy) goals and whilst, overall, New Labour and various government departments have become increasingly

receptive to those technical ‘scientific’ frames and therefore set institutional conditions where social engineering, educative and neuroscientific rationalisations have ultimately gained ascendancy, the interplay and elaboration of these different frames within policy has left England without a coherent overall rationale for EYEC. As such, some elements of EYEC policy are potentially more vulnerable than others. Indeed, whilst policies which have been informed by the educative frame have been universalised, Children’s Centres have been institutionalised as a marginal policy and as such may be more vulnerable to attack if another political party secures power, or indeed the national evaluation of Sure Start cannot generate enough convincing empirical evidence that such services produce the particular empirical outcomes on which they were rationalised in the first place. Indeed frames which stress claims to empirical and scientific evidence and produce specific future outcomes will live or die according to such evidence; constructing policies on the basis of social citizenship rights where embedded as they have been in some Nordic states may prove more difficult to dismantle. As was outlined in the previous chapter, many political analysts doubt the efficacy of purely micro solutions to broad structures of inequality, despite the benefits that some children may gain for their present well-being. Indeed in some ways it is possibly too early to tell whether EYEC policy has become sufficiently embedded within the institutions of the English welfare state to survive changing political fortunes. As the maternal care frame enjoyed a considerable a particularly long history it may yet take another significant period of time for a new ‘early years’ frame to become established.

4. CHAPTER FOUR: CANADA/ONTARIO: THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

“The time has come for a truly national system of early learning and child care, a system based on the four key principles that parents and child care experts say matter – quality, universality, accessibility and development” (Speech from the Throne, Canada, 2004).

When the Canadian Prime Minister, Paul Martin, announced via the Speech from the Throne that the Liberal government would be entering into Federal and Provincial negotiations with a \$5 billion plan to create a national system of early learning and childcare, there was a particular feeling of excitement amongst Canadian childcare advocates, child development experts and trade union members alike (Canada, 2005; CCAAC, 2004; CUPE, 2004; Friendly, 2006). The prospect of a set of bilateral agreements between the Federal government and the Provinces being secured and the enshrinement of a national system of early learning and childcare around four key ‘QUAD’ principles (quality, universality, accessibility and development) within Canada’s social policy framework was viewed by childcare advocates as heralding ‘a major social victory for Canada’ (Cool, 2007; CCAAC, 2004; Campaign 2000).

For many EYEC advocates, the 2004 commitment represented the final realisation of a decade old Liberal Party promise to develop a national childcare system and embodied a recognition of the demands and advocacy efforts of the Canadian childcare lobby, whose members had worked continuously towards securing childcare as a national (and provincial) priority since the 1960s (Friendly, 2006). Indeed, whilst the early 2000s had signalled rapid social policy innovation in early years policies and two previous ‘early years development’

agreements had been forged, providing (unconditional) funding to the provinces with a view to broadly supporting discrete ‘early years’ policies, with the advent of the 2004 plan, the Martin government had made a clear commitment (and indeed break with the previous initiatives) to develop a pan-Canadian EYEC *system*; a system which recognised the importance of integrating both ‘early years interventions’ and ‘childcare’ policies and which would be a conditional requirement in order to receive Federal funds (Canada, 2005: 119). As Paul Martin made clear,

“we are not just talking about child care. The focus here is on development, on giving children a leg up. That means each child will get a better start and a better chance of thriving in school and in life..... This is about making a permanent addition to our social foundation. It’s about making clear that this program is here to stay – because it is right for Canadian families and it’s what is right for our children” (Liberal Party, 2005; Martin, 2005).

In this way, the 2004 commitment signalled the possibility of switching the tracks of the Canadian EYEC policy trajectory from a historically residual ‘welfare’ service (especially within childcare) towards the establishment of a universal and integrated system; for the first time the federal government would have a clear social policy role in the lives of young children. Indeed, whilst maternal care ideas had quickly been destabilised in the post-war period and early policy initiatives had established a limited reconciliation of maternal care roles for low income or otherwise ‘at risk’ groups, like many other Anglo-Saxon countries, Canada did not continue onwards to develop a universal nor extensive (national) EYEC system, nor to establish a clear set of social policy relations between the state and young

children within the principles of the welfare state. Instead, Canada has a legacy of limited, fragmented systems in most provinces¹¹⁷, where a multiplicity of discrete early education and care services and programmes had evolved arbitrarily, each with their own goals, objectives and funding arrangements (Friendly, 2000: 253). Moreover, the prospect of a directive federal role in this policy area was all the more significant owing to complex federal, provincial and municipal relations and separate jurisdictions over elements of EYEC policy.

However, whilst the federal Liberal government was on the cusp of enshrining EYEC as a key pillar of the Canadian welfare state and provinces such as Ontario had signed up to the agreements-in-principle which would ensure their share of the federal funds for developing this new EYEC system, the election of the Conservative, Harper, government in January 2006 would signal a dramatic reversal of fortunes for those working within the EYEC field and cut short the prospect of a pan-Canadian EYEC system developing. In January 2006, the Government of Canada gave one year's notice that it would cancel the bilateral childcare agreements with the provinces and provide Federal funding for one year ending 31 March 2007 (Cool, 2007: 7). Instead, a 'Universal Child Care Benefit' would provide a taxable \$100 dollars a month allowance to all parents with children under six (ibid.). Framed as a policy which provided 'choice in childcare' yet set at too low a level to offset actual childcare costs, the policy could be better conceptualised as a maternal care supplement, reflecting the influence and power of the maternal care lobby, REAL women, within the Conservative party and the tacit prioritisation of maternal care ideas and familial forms of care. As the Minister

¹¹⁷ With the notable exception of Quebec which remains distinctive in having a universal EYEC system since 1997, where parents pay a full fee of \$5 dollars a day in centre-based Early Childhood Centres. For a full discussion of the Quebec case see Jenson, 2002. Here I am concerned with the developments at the Federal level and within the Ontario Province.

of Human Resources Development and Social Development (HRSDC), Dianne Finley asserted ‘the most important investment we can make as a country is to help families raise their children’ (HC Ottawa, 2006). As such, the Canadian EYEC policy trajectory is complex; in many ways the debate over EYEC policy (at the federal level) has appeared to come full circle with the apparent (re)turn to maternalism, which had previously had a limited impact on social policy initiatives, save for the immediate post-war period.

This chapter and the next account for the dramatic shifts in the Canadian EYEC policy trajectory at the federal level and within the province of Ontario. Understanding and explaining policy developments in Canada is necessarily complicated due to the structure of federal, provincial and municipal relations which has historically split funding, policy development and delivery between different levels. Indeed, childcare, education and other social policies have primarily been the responsibility of the provincial and municipal level. As such, each province has a distinctive EYEC programme, with different policy goals and aims, patterns of service delivery and levels of provision (Friendly, 2001: 30). The federal government’s role has generally been seen as maintaining an overarching policy framework of national principles and to provide financing and hence influences policy by financing particular priority policies through cost-sharing programmes (with provinces) or utilising the tax system to subsidise the cost of childcare directly to parents (Scherer, 2001: 187; Friendly, 2001: 30). However, the federal role in social policy vis-à-vis the provinces has ebbed and flowed over time. As such, any full Canadian policy analysis must necessarily take account of the different scalar relations and spatial dimensions of policy (Mahon, Andrew and Johnson, 2007: 41). The structural (policy) relationships between federal/provincial/municipal levels are non-linear and in places reciprocal; new EYEC policy

initiatives and ideas have appeared at all three levels and policy ideas have at points travelled ‘upwards’ as well as policy simply diffusing downwards. Indeed, particular (external) policy agents and advocates operate at multiple contexts, facilitating ideational flow between different scaler levels, creating complex contours for strategic action and producing similar yet distinctive policy effects in particular places. As such, this chapter will chart both federal initiatives, policy developments in Ontario and their elaboration (where necessary) with reference to the municipalities of York region and Toronto¹¹⁸.

I take a historical approach and seek to account for significant shifts in the EYEC policy of Canada/Ontario at the discursive level and as concretised in policy. I also address the interplay between (evolving) institutional policy making structures which have sustained particular relationships to external experts, forms of evidence and the state. These elements have generated the ascendance of particular EYEC ideational frames (and the bodies of expertise and evidence that support such frames), precipitating three key moments in which have defined the Canadian social policy trajectory. As in the case of England, discussed in the previous two chapters, these discursive and policy changes are related to alterations in the social structure, especially shifts in gender roles and in particular mothers’ formal labour market participation. It is hard to resist the argument that these changes have contributed to

¹¹⁸ I have chosen both Toronto and York as references as municipalities have some degrees of freedom as to how to plan and run services within the local community and implement policies differently. Indeed since the 1998 Services Improvement Act in Ontario, from 1999 the management of childcare and some early years services (save education which are dealt with by School Boards) were downloaded to the municipal level and since 2000 municipalities have had to write service plans every five years (Tyyska, 2001: 139; Wagle, 2006). Toronto is in some ways exceptional within Ontario, having one of the most extensive childcare systems in the province and as such I also refer in places to York region which is situated outside the metropolitan area of Toronto as a secondary case.

the emergence of EYEC as a significant policy issue in Ontario/Canada, just as we have seen they did in the English case. Briefly, these social structural factors show relatively similar patterns across the two cases – with the growth of mothers’ labour market participation arguably occurring slightly earlier in the latter case. In the UK, there was relatively little evidence to suggest that changes in mothers’ employment patterns directly triggered discursive change or the shifting influence of various EYEC frames. The slightly earlier emergence of this structural trend in Ontario/Canada might have been expected to have produced significant policy change, and perhaps entrenchment, earlier than was the case in England – and issue to which I will return at the end of the analysis of Canada.

This chapter begins with the argument that the early institutionalised policy divisions between childcare and early education and differing levels of policy commitment between them both shaped Ontario’s EYEC policy trajectory during the post-war period and conditioned the strategic priorities of early advocacy and other expert efforts towards securing the extension of the weaker (child) care aspects of EYEC policy. With the growth of maternal labour market participation during the 1970s and 1980s and aided in part by the federal funding of feminist advocacy and research, a vocal childcare advocating lobby gained prominence, seeking to secure a universal not-for-profit childcare system based on ‘equality of opportunities’ ideas informed by feminism. As this chapter explains, the Royal Commission on the Status of Women provided an open space and focal point in the federal bureaucratic structure for the expertise and policy ideas generated from a feminist perspective and with significant national media interest, sufficient ideational and material pressure was generated to secure federal and provincial attention on childcare policy.

However, as Canada entered a critical juncture over EYEC policy, with an incumbent government much less sympathetic to gender equity arguments, a debate over auspice and federal jurisdictions over provincial policy making would prove divisive and ultimately lead to the failure of a national plan. With the absence of alternative EYEC frames (and attendant ideas and evidence) to motivate ongoing policy discussions and as federal policy making institutions became increasingly closed towards ‘equality of opportunity’ experts, policy momentum was lost. Hence the prospects of a national EYEC system emerging in the future appeared increasingly unlikely. This chapter concludes by discussing a neo-liberal politics of austerity and of New Public Management (NPM) ideas, where fiscal priorities over managing debt took precedence over social policy initiatives and precipitated a general federal retreat from social policy making, it increasingly appeared that both the federal and provincial levels would revert back towards, and lock into, a liberal, residual policy framework. At the provincial level the neo-liberal Harris government embarked upon significant retrenchment of existing EYEC services.

Paradoxically, however, the next chapter will show that certain institutional developments emerged from this same wave of federal reforms. Alongside developing neuroscientific ‘early years’ ideas and evidence, these changes would open up a new avenue through which EYEC would become an important (policy) priority at federal and provincial levels; albeit in a radically new form. The next chapter argues that the development of the National Longitudinal Survey for Children and Youth (NLSCY) and the establishment of the Applied Research Branch within the federal government, altered the context and form of federal social policy innovation; creating institutional conditions which privileged ‘evidence-based’ policy ideas and expertise, precipitating another contingent period of openness in the policy making

process, upon which a different set of EYEC expert actors could infiltrate social policy debates. As will be shown, these particular institutional conditions allowed for the ascendancy of ‘scientifically informed’ neuroscience and educative EYEC frames and the particular influence of experts from the Canadian Institute for Advanced Research who made links between NLSCY child development outcomes and the necessity of early years policies. I argue that, once established, these ‘scientific’ ideas significantly altered Canada’s social policy priorities at both federal and provincial levels, generating political interest in early years of children’s lives and directing policy attention towards a broad spectrum of early years policy interventions, even within the height of broader neo-liberal restructuring and retrenchment. During the late 1990s and early 2000s there was a rapid set of social policy innovations in the EYEC policy field, rationalised by this evidence.

Initially, the injection of these ‘scientific’ EYEC frames into the policy process and the first waves of EYEC policy initiatives precluded the development of an extensive, coherent or integrated EYEC system. Indeed, despite the broadening of the EYEC debate, feminist and early years experts operated in isolation rather than forming a broad ‘early years’ network, advocating for their distinct agendas rather than combining or linking them. Hence the existence of multiple ideational frames added complexity and instability within the ‘early years’ discursive terrain, opening up divergent paths to policy action, rather than a common (policy) consensus. As these frames fought for ascendancy, the disproportionate influence of neuroscientific experts and ideas in the policy making process would condition against alternative and existing EYEC frames. Indeed, as shall be shown, the particular reading of neuroscientific ideas by early years experts in this case did not make explicit links to the importance of ‘childcare’ within EYEC policy, inhibiting the re-emergence of the ‘equality of

opportunities' EYEC frame and also directed policy attention towards the very early years. Hence within Ontario, this precipitated a somewhat paradoxical social policy expansion through discrete 'early intervention' policy initiatives alongside a continued retraction of broader childcare and early education services.

The OECD's thematic review had a particular effect upon the Canadian EYEC policy trajectory at both levels of government. It strengthened a 'child-centred' frame which articulated the link between integrating 'care' and 'education' and open up the policy process to formerly marginalised 'childcare' advocates, bringing disparate agendas together and reconfigure a holistic frame for (policy) action. However, with a change of government at the federal level, opposed to federal involvement in childcare policy and greatly influenced by maternal care frames, the EYEC national plan has been suspended. The next chapter will document attempts to continue developing 'a child centred' EYEC policy at the provincial levels and efforts from the Canadian Senate to re-ignite federal policy attention towards a child-centred EYEC frame.

4.1 A (partial) 'early years' policy laggard? Early EYEC policy initiatives at the provincial and federal levels and the institutional split between early education and care

Mahon and Phillips argue that Canada's childcare policy has been embedded in a broader 'liberal' welfare regime, which tends to minimise the state's role relative to families and markets (2002: 192). Although when analysing childcare in isolation it is true to say that early policy initiatives did not establish a universal publicly funded system, other 'educative' elements of EYEC policy were quickly established as a free public service, with something

like a universal early education policy becoming embedded within many provinces, including Ontario. Therefore, when looking across the 'liberal' regime family policy and more broadly at EYEC, initially Canada may not appear to be so much of a policy laggard or residual as other 'liberal' countries. Moreover, at various points in Ontario's history and at the federal level, there has been significant political interest in childcare policies and the needs of (working) mothers, despite the lack of a full realisation of feminist demands for universal childcare.

Within Ontario, an early institutional split between care and education was enshrined in the provincial social policy framework. Early education in the form of kindergarten has a long history in Ontario, which since the late 19th Century has been providing part-time classes to children under six, falling under the jurisdiction of the provincial education act (Friendly, 2000: 265). Junior kindergartens were originally established to 'provide compensatory education for disadvantaged populations', yet during the 1940s to early 1960s there was a steady growth of programmes and the extension of services towards the broader population (Kyle, 1991: 404; 370). These provincially funded, free classes have generally been offered on a half day basis (although rural areas have alternate day schedules to save transportation costs) for children 3 years and 8 months up to 5 years old (in junior and senior kindergarten) (ibid: 404). Viewed as exclusively educational, as the 1971 Birch paper asserts, 'to prepare young children for formal schooling... their hours are necessarily tied to the hours of the school system and are therefore not suitable for working mothers', the curriculum seeks to 'assist children to develop a positive attitude to learning... appropriate social behaviour with peers and adults, communication skills that set the foundation for learning' (ibid: 373; Colley, 2006: 19). By September 1990 it was mandatory for school boards to offer half day senior

and junior kindergarten; and Ontario would provide funding to school boards that had the space and the desire to provide full-day senior kindergarten (Kyle, 1991: 434). Kindergarten teachers are well remunerated having similar wages to that of elementary teaching staff, which in 2000, averaged \$53,764 (compared to \$19,000 per annum for childcare workers) and have access to full benefits, career ladder, holidays and professional associations¹¹⁹ (Colley, 2006: 25). As Mathien states, 'kindergartens are firmly within mainstream childhood experience' (2001: 220).

In contrast, the childcare element of EYEC has not been subject to the same level of state/provincial involvement. As in many liberal welfare states, extra-familial care has been viewed to some extent as the less appropriate than (or providing no significant advantages over) parental care and less valuable than broader early education policies. However, it is important to note that the 'maternal care' frame focused on maternal attachment which served to prevent the development of post-war childcare initiatives in other Anglo-Saxon welfare states did not appear to shape Ontario's policy discussions¹²⁰ (despite their influence in other (eastern) provincial and federal contexts). In a great part this was due to the way in which the first war nurseries were developed from the Federal/Provincial Wartime Day Nurseries

¹¹⁹ At a pan-Canadian level, the Canadian Teachers' Federation (CTF), created in 1920, represents all the provincial/territorial teachers' 61 associations. While it does not have collective bargaining powers of its own, it assists provincial/territorial teachers' federations in collective bargaining by providing information on salaries, benefit levels and average workloads across the country (Doherty, Friendly, Beach, 2003: 60.).

¹²⁰ Within the department of Public Welfare and latterly (1972) the Ministry of Community and Social Services (Collier, 2001: 126.).

Agreement¹²¹. Indeed, within Ontario, a Day Nurseries Branch within the Department of Public Welfare sought to develop developmental (rather than simply custodial) childcare programmes from the federal funding and such programmes would provide ‘enrichment’ for all children, rather than providing special services for those purely ‘at risk’ (Krashinsky, 1977: 17). As such, municipal war nurseries were not established as simply places for ‘neglected’ children or those whose parents could not provide adequate care; childcare could have positive benefits also. This may have gone some way to prevent the influence of Bowlby’s attachment theory and wider maternal care frame (propounding the idea that childcare damages children) taking hold in Ontario as it had at elsewhere¹²². Moreover, when federal funding was withdrawn at the end of the war, early advocacy efforts by mother’s, women’s and welfare organisations and the Communist Party¹²³ secured a continued provincial commitment to support these centres, thus establishing childcare within the provincial social policy framework (Finkel, 2006: 195).

The resulting Ontario Day Nurseries Act (1946) offered 50 per cent funding of operating expenses to any municipality undertaking or providing care (for pre-school children) and required licensing and inspection of day care and nursery schools (Krashinsky, 1977: 18). Municipalities tended to keep open the existing nurseries but balked at establishing new centres since they would be solely responsible for their capital costs and the maintenance of

¹²¹ In 1942 at the height of the Second World War, the federal government provided 50-50 cost sharing for childcare centres in participating provinces (of which Ontario and Quebec signed on) through the Dominion-Provincial Wartime Day Nurseries Agreement (Prentice, 2000: 275.).

¹²² For a discussion of the influence of Bowlby’s attachment ideas at the federal level see Goelman, 1992.

¹²³ The ending of the Federal/Provincial agreement prompted the establishment of the Day Nursery and Day Care Parents Association in Toronto in 1946. The association, the first major childcare advocacy activity in Ontario, organised public meetings, wrote letters to newspapers and lobbied extensively to support their campaign.

the standards outlined in the Act (Finkel, 2006: 195). Thus, the act did not lead to a growth in municipal childcare¹²⁴ (especially outside of Toronto) and commercial and non-profit parent co-operatives developed to fill the vacuum, with most mothers making childcare arrangements without state assistance and within unregulated forms of care¹²⁵ (Kyle, 1991: 370). Fees in regulated care were expensive; between 1948 and 1951 daycare fees in Toronto rose six fold (Finkel, 2006: 196). However, despite the popular press trivialising maternal work as a ‘double work day for fanciful reasons’¹²⁶, with the absence of a strong maternal care frame, the province did not actively discourage mothers (even for young children) from choosing paid work. As such, childcare did not have same negative connotations as in places where the frame embedded more fully. The central debate concerned who should receive provincial assistance towards the costs of childcare (which was extremely limited and unevenly spread) and how far provincial responsibility for care should extend.

These policy debates and the subsequent policy trajectory would be influenced by the introduction of federal cost-sharing programme, the *Canada Assistance Plan* (CAP) in 1966 when the issue of childcare was infiltrating national debates and federal policy discussions¹²⁷

¹²⁴ Indeed spending in Ontario between 1949 and 1964 hovered around \$200,000 dollars and it would not be until the Canada Assistance Plan that spending would double year on year during the late 1960s/early 1970s (Krashinsky, 1977: 35.).

¹²⁵ In a 1967 survey of working mothers with 3 and 4 year old children, half were cared for by relatives, a quarter by non-relatives and only three per cent by day care centres; the rest were cared for in a multiplicity of care arrangements or not at all (Krashinsky, 1977: 11.).

¹²⁶ Often it was argued that working mothers simply wanted to ‘augment her husband’s respectable salary so that the household could pile up material possessions and engage in status contests with neighbours’ (Finkel, 2006: 199.).

¹²⁷ As Jenson, Mahon and Phillips, document the feminist voice was generally quiet during the 1950s and 1960s (before the feminist and childcare advocacy groups came to the fore) save for the Family and Child Welfare

as economic and social changes (especially with the increase in maternal labour market participation) created a greater demand for childcare. It was not the case that the federal government was actively seeking to reconcile these particular demands (Pence and Benner, 2000: 135). Instead, CAP originated from a broader ‘war on poverty’ agenda which sought to prevent poverty by providing social assistance and a range of welfare services to a selected segment of Canadians. It was not explicitly designed to fund childcare programmes per se, nor designed to induce the commodification of maternal labour ¹²⁸(Friendly, Rothman, Oloman, 1991: 19; Mahon and Philips, 2002: 197). Indeed, the federal government, where the material care frame and ‘attachment’ theory has a lingering influence, seemed to operate with a more restrictive concept of childcare than had been established within Ontario. As Prochner argues:

“When the [federal] government took on major responsibility for day care, it also took on traditional attitudes towards the service it was providing. Day care never outgrew the stigma of its charitable origins or its reputation as a low-status inferior substitute for home care” (2000: 61).

At the federal level childcare (funding) was conceived as a strictly residual welfare service, intended for needy families ‘who require financial assistance or who require social services to

Division of the Canadian Welfare Council, which became the focal point of a network of local social workers who voiced the need for help for low income families in arranging non-parental childcare (2003: 141.).

¹²⁸ Indeed, some early arguments made by the Ontario Association of Social workers presented daycare as a means for enhancing the efficiency of women worker’s at home and in the work-place, however arguments presenting daycare as aiding full employment were not successful in Canada (as they were elsewhere – for example in Sweden) as the Trudeau government indicated that inflation not unemployment would be its main preoccupation (Finkel, 2006: 211.).

prevent, overcome, or alleviate the causes of poverty or child neglect' (Status of Day Care in Canada, 1974, cited in Goelman, 1992: 246). That is, childcare was conceived as a purely custodial service which might aid mothers' labour market access where a single family income was insufficient. CAP funding to the provinces was complex. The federal government entered into open-ended agreements with provinces to reimburse up to 50% of childcare service costs (which the province shared 30% and 20% with the municipalities) through two main routes: a more generous 'welfare services route' which would provide fee subsidies for needy or low income parents and operating grants for regulated non-profit or government and a 'social assistance route' which simply provided 'needs-tested' fee subsidies within both non-profit and commercially operated programmes (Friendly, Rothman, Oloman, 1991: 29). Ontario (unlike most other provinces) chose the latter route. Hence with the advent of CAP, eligible families in Ontario¹²⁹ could receive fee subsidies up to 50% of their costs for childcare in provincial, municipal, or commercial facilities (Doherty, Friendly, Lero, 1998: 8).

As such, CAP had a significant policy effect within Ontario, markedly influencing the subsequent trajectory of development. An underlying tension was created between the early, universal 'developmental' emphasis of the early childcare programmes and the structures of financing which directed policy towards those 'at risk'. With federal influence, the reconciliation of childcare costs was established purely for low income families and with other risk profiles; families which did not fall under the criteria of the needs test had to pay

¹²⁹ The definition of financial need under CAP is vague, a 'needs' test would be required in order to obtain federal reimbursement of share of costs. In Ontario the needs test was a complicated form which required parents to document family income from which 'allowable expenses' were subtracted in order to calculate how much income could be spent on fees and how much would be supported by the province (Krashinsky, 1977: 20.).

full fees¹³⁰ (Krashinsky, 1977: 21). So, for example, York, which had previously provided some fee subsidy to all users of municipal daycare, phased out this system (ibid.). Moreover, whilst CAP established a more stable income-base for childcare centres participating in the ‘purchase of service’ scheme¹³¹, the childcare fee subsidies (paid to operators) never realised the full operating costs of providing childcare places (especially those which had established early development programmes) and as such, places were increasingly indirectly subsidised by low staff salaries, a lack of benefits and sometimes meagre facilities (Kyle, 1991: 371). Moreover, by allowing for federal-sharing of fee subsidies in commercially operated programmes, it laid the groundwork for the growth of for-profit programmes in Ontario, although purely provincial funding would continue to support non-profit and municipal day care centres only (ibid.).

CAP in this way both aided the growth of childcare during the 1970s but also shaped provincial policy development. Indeed, the 1970s saw significant expansion of childcare and provincial spending; with the number of spaces increasing at an annual rate of over 30% between 1971 and 1973 and almost doubled between 1973 and 1974. 100% capital grants

¹³⁰ As of 1971 parents could deduct part of their childcare expenses under the Child Care Expense Deduction against tax but this required receipts and the majority of unlicensed caregivers (which invariably were the cheaper and more readily available form of childcare) and hence take up was low (Mahon and Phillips, 2002: 194.).

¹³¹ The purchase of service agreements were the mechanism by which municipalities would organise the fee subsidies system. Commercial, non-profit and municipal childcare centres would enter into purchase of services agreements with the municipality whereby the centres would receive the part payment of funds as defined by the Children’s service department of the municipality (the needs test) and eligible parents would therefore pay less to the centre (Wagle, 2006).

were made available by Ontario during the early 1970s¹³² for municipal and non-profit organisations to build centres (Krashinsky, 1977: 15). Day care expenditure in Ontario had jumped from \$615,269 in 1968 to \$16,275,759 in 1975 and the number of centres increased three fold during the 1970s from roughly 500 centres in 1971 to 1,500 in 1980 (ibid: 35; Skelton, 1996: 67). So, despite significant expansion in Ontario's childcare (albeit from a low base), clear limits were in place on the extent to which the childcare system could to expand and on for whom care costs would be reconciled with the province. Indeed, as the 1974 white paper, *Day Care Services to Children*, known as the Birch Paper (Ontario's first major policy statement about childcare) stated:

“We will not establish a system of ‘free’ universal day care across Ontario... a costly and unnecessary monopoly over day care services to young children – services that, for the most part, people are able to provide for themselves” (cited in Kyle, 1991: 373).

Following the CAP policy structures, provincial priorities for public funds would be similarly allocated for ‘those with the greatest social and financial need’ (i.e. handicapped children; low income families and native children) and with any remaining funds devoted towards ‘the growth of services to all children in Ontario’ (Krashinsky, 1977: 19). As such, the setting of specific policy limits to childcare expansions meant that with the rapid growth of maternal labour market participation in Canada during the 1970s (from roughly 25% in 1970 to 47.5% in 1981) the need for childcare consistently outstripped supply (despite the fact that Ontario

¹³² One was Project Day Care which began in 1971 offering \$10 million dollars to create 150 new nurseries serving 4000 children and in 1974 an amendment to the Day Nurseries Act allowed the Minister to establish 100% capital grants for centres (for municipalities and non-profit organisations) (Krashinsky, 1977: 19).

has the lion's share of childcare services across Canada – Goelman, 1992: 235; Truelove, 1996: 37). As Goelman notes:

“The emerging tension was one in which the governmental system of supporting childcare was trapped in its early conceptual welfare framework that was no longer appropriate for the dramatic demographic and social developments in society” (1992: 235).

So, despite the provision of some childcare from early policy initiatives, the increase in maternal labour force participation rates generated significant demand for increased provision and it was apparent that a much broader reconciliation of (maternal) care via the state was required.

4.2 The shaping of an equality of opportunities ‘childcare’ agenda: the Canadian EYEC advocacy and expert community

The early division between early education vis-à-vis care and the stronger policy history of the former in Ontario conditioned the strategic priorities of provincial EYEC advocates and experts towards certain forms research and advocacy, particularly on extending and improving the *care* aspects of EYEC policy. Because, in a sense, half the policy debate over EYEC policy had already been won (especially within Ontario) the evidence-base that developed and the framing of EYEC by advocates was shaped in a particular way. The issue of early education for children has tended to be considered a closed topic and has rarely been

interrogated by Canadian advocacy groups or researchers¹³³, arguably due to the distinct legacy of pre-school education in Ontario, together with provincial dominance of education policy. Indeed pre-school education would not appear to be a significant part of the provincial and federal EYEC policy debate until the neuroscientific frame generated a reappraisal of early education policy in the mid to late 1990s. Moreover, in the absence of a strong embedding of the material care frame (especially at provincial level), childcare was, *at the very least*, treated as a neutral custodial service supporting the welfare of low income families. Indeed, many non-profit childcare centres were viewed as having positive benefits for children's development. Hence there did not develop (nor was there a particular need for) a specific counter-discourse and evidential base to attachment theory and the idea that that childcare damaged children. In this way also, a specific line of research investigating the developmental, educative and social/emotional effects of EYEC upon children (in the Canadian context) did not develop. It has been notably absent within the Ontario EYEC advocacy community or in ongoing policy debates¹³⁴.

Instead a distinct focus upon the (child) care aspects of EYEC policy framed through equality of opportunities ideas developed and defined both external and internal policy debates. Early provincial advocacy efforts tended to arise through protest groups (often parents, childcare

¹³³ One study of note during the 1970s was the 1973 University of Western Ontario Pre-School project initiated by Mary J Wright which assessed the impact of compensatory education (two years of kindergarten) on low-SES (Social Economic Status) children. Over the long term (to grade 3) pre-school had positive effects on intellectual cognitive and academic achievement (Howe, Jacobs, Fiorentino, 2000: 226.). However this study simply reinforced the existing policy structure of kindergarten.

¹³⁴ Indeed during the early 1990s Doherty produced an annotated bibliography of 49 international research studies on childcare quality regarding development, of which only two were Canadian and one of which operationalised quality simply through licensing standards (Pence and Benner, 2000: 148.).

and social service workers, feminists and other advocates), which sought to maintain commitments to early childcare initiatives. Subsequently these advocates engaged with provincial childcare policy debates in the late 1960s and 1970s, which had put upper limits on the state reconciliation of (child) care and which had allowed the growth of commercial childcare. In particular, the Day Care Reform Action Alliance was set up in response to the Birch Paper's rejection of universal childcare and the imposition of upper spending limits (Collier, 2001: 125). Through the alliance's demonstrations, pickets and actions in the legislature the common principles and concerns among activists were clarified, as Collier argues:

“Many of the views that have characterised childcare advocacy in Ontario – the insistence on quality child care, the demands for better more extensive public funding and the concern that making profits on childcare was a disincentive to quality – had their beginnings in the advocacy efforts of this period” (2001: 125).

In this way, research linked to provincial childcare advocacy comprised mostly technical policy studies; indexing structural levels of quality in childcare services differentiated by auspice¹³⁵ (Prentice, 2000: 277). On the basis of these structural indices of 'quality', which included measures of staff to child ratios, health considerations, wages, working conditions, and age appropriate programming, a consistent finding was that non-profit centres scored

¹³⁵ Krashinsky's (1977) study, *Day Care and Public Policy in Ontario*, sought to make the case for establishing not-for-profit childcare and an extensive survey of the types of provisions/staff ratios/wage differentials in different childcare auspices. Latterly Friendly (1986) and SPR Associates (1986) would conduct research into childcare quality and conclude that commercial care tended to fare poorly when measured on staff-to-child ratios, turnover rates and quality of programming (Prentice, 2000: 270.).

much higher on these measures than commercial care, whilst municipal facilities maintained reasonably uniform standards but provided the highest salaries (ibid: 275; Krashinsky, 1977: 124). Childcare advocates at local level began to form a distinct advocacy agenda constructed around the issue of auspice and sought to increase the availability of high quality, non-profit/municipal childcare services in Ontario.

At the federal level, representatives of thirty national women's organisations formed the Committee for Equality for Women in Canada (CEW) and were successful in pressing the government to establish a Royal Commission on the Status of Women (RCSW) with a remit to 'recommend what steps might be taken by the Federal Government to ensure for women equal opportunities with men in all aspects of Canadian society' (Adamson, 1995: 253). While this represented an important recognition of the women's movement, as Bakvis argues, royal commissions have been one of the more prominent ways to remove contentious issues of public policy into a more neutral area; indeed their recommendations often carry considerable weight but governments are not bound by them (2000: 81). However, this also entailed a degree of freedom towards policy innovation and the inclusion of a wide base of external expertise; the RCSW would provide an institutional focal point and a national platform where various groups concerned with developing policies to create gender equality convened and established a federal funding base for ongoing research and advocacy. Within this project, and of key importance to the broader EYEC debate, childcare was identified as an essential for women's equality and the RCSW made the first official recommendation for a national, universal childcare programme (Doherty, Friendly, Beach, 2003: 2.). As such, the RCSW provided a national focal point for provincial childcare advocates, the labour movement and feminists to begin to work together; blending the technical policy and survey

research from (provincial) childcare advocacy and a broader (policy) agenda informed by social knowledge shaped by second wave feminism¹³⁶. As Friendly, Rothman and Oloman note:

“An important feature of the debate about childcare was the consensus about fundamental principles for a childcare system that developed among child care advocates and a broad range of other groups including women’s labour and professional organisations” (1991: 22).

In this way, a vocal ‘childcare’ lobby was formed framing EYEC through ‘equality of opportunities ideas’. With federal funding from the Canadian Council on Social Development and the department of Health and Welfare, two national conferences were held in Winnipeg (the first being in 1971 and the second in 1982), which would increasingly shape local and national debates. Based on the recommendations from the first conference, the federal government established the more permanent Canadian Advisory Council on the Status of Women (CACSW) and the National Day Care Information Office within Health and Welfare Canada, which in 1973 began issuing the annual *Status of Day Care in Canada* reports (Pence and Benner, 2000: 141).

¹³⁶ Indeed some advocacy groups from the early 1970s (especially with a large representation from the labour movement) initially argued for ‘free universal and quality *state* daycare. Yet with the interaction with the knowledge and expertise of provincial advocates (who stressed that non-profit childcare maintained high quality) and in part to gain more mainstream support groups such as Action Daycare (latterly Ontario Coalition for Better Daycare) moved to lobbying for ‘universally accessible, publicly funded not-for-profit and non-compulsory daycare system’ (White, 2001: 100).

The 1982 ‘Second National Daycare Conference’ held in Winnipeg, was a particularly important moment for national childcare advocacy, with the establishment of Canada’s main lobbying body, the Child Care Advocacy Association of Canada (CCAAC) and the more professionally orientated Canadian Childcare Federation, Canadian Childcare Federation (CCCF)¹³⁷. Here a consensus developed on the fundamental principles for a potential childcare system shaped by an equal opportunities frame for EYEC. They argued for a universally accessible, comprehensive, non profit, non-compulsory childcare system. Within this, childcare centres which would operate for full, short or long days or extended or unusual hours, located in residential communities, at or near workplaces, in schools or in the other locations, available on a full-time or part-time basis’ (Friendly, Rothman, Oloman, 1991: 5). Moreover childcare should be of ‘high quality’ as the groups were against ‘false solutions which encourage inequitable access, entrenching poor quality care and limit real choices for women’ (ibid: 22). High quality in this case was discursively linked with working conditions of the childcare staff (invariably due to the high representation of labour groups attuned to the importance of employment rights), which dovetailed neatly with a broader feminist agenda to ensure better employment rights and equality in areas where women had traditionally been disproportionately employed. Moreover and certainly linked to this framing of high quality was auspice; to ensure state support purely for not-for-profit childcare centres. For the CDCAA and its supporters, high quality through good wages and provision could only be assured through either state-run (usually municipal) or not-for profit childcare centres, preferably where parents should also have a role in the delivery of childcare programmes (Rothman and Kass, 1999: 264). High quality could certainly not be assured by the

¹³⁷ CCAAC was previously called the Canadian Day Care Advocacy Association (CDCAA) and CCDF was previously called Canadian Child Daycare Federation (CCDF).

commercial sector¹³⁸ which, as businesses, were required to make a profit from what the advocates viewed in contrast as a social service, akin to education or healthcare (Jenson, Mahon and Philips, 2003: 142). Hence the most critical struggle according to the lobby was to ensure that the commercial sector did not usurp the public funds in the hoped for period of childcare expansion (Rothman and Kass, 1999: 264).

4.3 Developing a childcare system through an ‘equal opportunities’ frame? The highs and lows of feminist advocacy and the limits to childcare expansion within Ontario

In many ways, the period from the mid-1980s to the mid-1990s were the highest and also the lowest point for childcare advocates working with an ‘equality of opportunity’ agenda and also for those working within childcare services in Ontario. As a General Manager of Children’s Services in Toronto remarked

“If people had told me I was having the best year I was ever going to have in 1990 then I would have enjoyed it better, because after 1990 we started having shortfalls and financial problems, up until then the system was growing because provincial governments were funding it” (Patterson, 2006).

Indeed there was a great deal of federal interest across Liberal and Conservative governments in childcare policy, in a great part facilitated by the ascendancy of equality of opportunity ideas within federal institutions such as the CACSW and within Health and Welfare.

¹³⁸ The commercial sector is represented by the Canadian Child Daycare Federation (CCDCF) which included in its ranks both professional early childhood educators and commercial childcare providers (Jenson, Mahon, Philips, 2003: 142.).

Through such contexts and reporting (especially through the *Status of Daycare* reports) there was a clear articulation of the changing economic base of families and the inability of the current policy framework to respond to rapid changes within the social structure. It was not something that the federal government could therefore easily claim to be unaware of.

Moreover, as Lynne Westlake remarked on her time working in the childcare movement in the early 1980s, ‘you couldn’t have a more friendly press corps following the issue, it was easy to get coverage and they would call and things would be in the national media very quickly because it was a hot issue’ (Westlake, 2006). In this way, sufficient pressure was generated that all three national party leaders pledged themselves to a national day care programme to improve the situation on a televised leader’s debate during the 1984 federal election (Finkel, 2006: 213).

The ‘childcare crisis’ was now established as a national priority and the federal government acknowledged its role to respond by establishing two federal task forces on childcare, which both recommended a clear federal role in developing a national childcare system but differed greatly over the issue of auspice.

The first Ministerial task force headed by Dr Katie Cooke had been appointed by the outgoing Liberal government in 1994. It undertook an extensive research and review process with a clear ‘equality of opportunities’ focus, drawing from this specific research base, which framed its eventual recommendations. These stated that the federal government should take an active lead in policy and should develop a comprehensive system of publicly-funded, high quality, universally-accessible, non-profit childcare and expand paid parental leave. In short, Cooke recommended a system which would be as ‘accessible and competent as our systems of health

care and education' (Friendly, Rothman, Oloman, 1991: 25). Significant to the tracing of EYEC discourse and framing at the Federal level, whilst the Cooke report made reference to childcare akin to comprehensive systems such as 'education' it was clear that early education and care continued to be viewed as discrete policies, reflecting the singular influence of the equality of opportunities frame in conceptualising (child) care policy. Indeed, the Cooke report recommends (for the provinces which had not already done so) provisions to provide half-day nursery schools for pre-school children (Goelman, 1992: 237). However Cooke did not consider the potential integration these 'educative' policies with broader childcare services and indeed following the consensus at the time, educative or child developmental factors neither constructed definitions of 'quality' within childcare (which instead made reference to structural indices as outlined above). However, Cooke articulated a clear agenda which sought to broadly socialise childcare and would have formed the significant basis on which childcare and broader EYEC policy could develop¹³⁹.

Cooke reported in 1986 to the Progressive Conservative government which was much less sympathetic to gender equity concerns. Nevertheless, owing to the pressure surrounding the childcare issue, that government mounted a second inquiry, the *Special Parliamentary Committee on Child Care* (reporting in 1987). This formed the basis of the Progressive Conservative's proposals for a National Strategy on Child Care and led to the tabling of the Canada Child Care Act (Bill C-144) and the provision of extra research funding through the

¹³⁹ Indeed as in Sweden, whilst care may have started as custodial with a significant number of municipal centres developed, latterly the form of care within these centres can be augmented to provide enrichment without inflating the cost of care for families.

1988 Child Care Initiatives Fund, primarily for children at risk ¹⁴⁰ (Friendly, 2000: 258).

Taking a different approach from Cooke, the Committee argued that the state should not take an active role in socialising childcare and defining national principles but should ‘assume its share of responsibility for childcare by supporting, where possible the role of parents, employers, provincial and territorial governments and childcare providers by using its taxing powers’ (Goelman, 1992: 239). The recommendations included the lion’s share of federal funding devoted to childcare tax breaks for parents which therefore proposed undirected childcare ‘supply side’ funding (across multiple settings) rather than directing parents towards centre based (and non-profit) care and further entrenching the principle that federal childcare support would be conditional upon labour market attachment and more broadly that childcare was simply custodial. The *Committee* also recommended capital and operating grants to childcare providers should be available for both non-profit and commercial childcare programmes (Friendly, Rothman, Oloman, 1991: 25). The Child Care Act proposed \$4 billion over 7 years for this plan, taking childcare funding out of the open-ended CAP structure of finance. This would put limits upon federal childcare spending and a ceiling on growth in order to provide the new system (Mahon and Phillips, 2002: 201). To summarise the approach, the Mulroney government proposed childcare expansion but not necessarily ‘quality’ expansion. Given the position on non-profit auspice and limits on childcare funding expansion (due to the exclusion of childcare policy from CAP), the CDCAA and other childcare advocacy organisations vigorously opposed this Bill. As White states ‘their view at the time was that it was better to have no childcare system at all than a deeply flawed,

¹⁴⁰ The CCIF was mainly focused upon setting up childcare demonstration projects (i.e. to integrate special needs children into normal child settings) and the research primarily focused upon needs assessments and feasibility studies. As a CCIF staff member commented ‘these studies provided a clear picture of what was needed but there is no more need for them. Other areas of research were neglected’ (Pence and Benner, 2000: 137.).

commercial one with no national standards' (2000: 102). Following legislative committee hearings where all submissions opposed the legislation, Bill C-144 died in the Senate on the eve of the 1988 federal election (Friendly, Rothman, Oloman, 1991: 25).

In 1990 the re-elected Progressive Conservatives placed a ceiling of 5% growth in CAP contributions (in the four richer provinces which included Ontario), directly limiting federal contributions to childcare expansion. Where provinces wished to expand spending further, faced had to meet the relevant costs (White, 2000: 103). White argues that the childcare advocate's opposition to the bill was a strategic mistake, even though the Bill might have been 'bad policy'. By taking an all or nothing attitude to childcare its failure prevented piecemeal expansion (albeit across different auspices) which could have been remedied in future revisions to the legislation (ibid: 105). Jenson, Mahon and Phillips (2003) see the decision to hold out for more was understandable, when placed in context. The shift towards neo-liberal policies of austerity had yet to be fully institutionalised and with the high profile accorded to the childcare issue it did not seem unrealistic to press for an adequately funded policy that designed to ensure universal access to quality childcare across the country (2003: 142). While Ontario already funded both commercial and non-profit centres under CAP (so the legislation would not have made very much of a difference to texture of childcare services), in other provinces this revision might have radically altered the ratio of private and non-profit auspices.

The 'equalities of opportunity' frame had brought childcare to the top of the agenda, becoming embedded within particular semi-autonomous advisory council and other institutional contexts. It does, however, seem that by constructing the EYEC debate through

this frame in isolation, its fate relied on a government broadly sympathetic to gender equity arguments. In the absence of this – with Mulroney incumbent – the potential resonance of EYEC policy with different (government) actors was limited, particularly given the divisive issues of quality and auspice which had led to the collapse of the national plan. The evidence-base on which arguments for EYEC were being made was rather narrow. So too were articulations of EYEC services. Intuitively the discourse of ‘high quality childcare services’ (according to the structural definitions laid out by advocates) might seem best for children (their wellbeing and development). However, this line of argument was neither pursued nor supported by research; it was largely absent from the policy agenda. The advocates considered it somewhat of a given. So, while they strongly opposed expansions in ‘low quality’ purely custodial commercial centres they did not present a particularly strong counter-thesis (for example demonstrating that child wellbeing, developmental or educative outcomes could only be supported in not-for-profit/municipal centres) which might have resonated with those governmental actors who were not receptive to gender equity arguments. To some extent, there was recognition of the need for an expanded research base, which had precipitated the federal government to create a Child Care Initiatives Fund to develop research. However, the 1988 National Childcare Study which arose from this endeavour continued to work with a rather limited conception of EYEC as broadly custodial. Indeed it defined childcare as ‘any form of care... while parents were engaged in paid or unpaid work, study or other personal or social activities’ (Friendly, 2001: 27). As ‘equality of opportunities’ ideas were losing ground in federal political debates, there was a telling absence of alternative EYEC frames (and attendant expertise and evidence) circulating at the time, to provide an alternative ideational basis to motivate further policy discussions.

At the provincial level, there was a similar move towards and subsequent step back from the establishment of a universal childcare system. It broadly mirrored the trajectory of developments at the federal level, as provincial policy makers also engaged with the equality of opportunity frame forwarded by provincial advocates. These endeavours were ultimately financially hampered by the federal rejection of the equality of opportunity frame and broader measures to cut (federal) spending.

Childcare expenditure in Ontario continued to grow during the 1980s, but the nature and texture of the 'welfare' policy framework remained. By 1989, 35.6% of licensed childcare spaces were run by commercial centres against 64.5% non-profit/municipal (Kyle, 1991: 392-3). One small but nevertheless significant development in Ontario's EYEC policy which was nested into this 'welfare framework' was the establishment of small scale project in 1981 to create a number of 'Family Resource Centres' (often in rural or small communities but some appeared in more urban areas) which provided community based and often specific services for 'at risk' individuals (ie teen parents), such as childcare registry, playgroups, toy lending libraries and caregiver support (such as education) and other informal local initiatives (Toronto, 2005: 12).

Most policy attention was, however, directed towards childcare for working women. The prominence of childcare federally during the early 1980s was matched by the recently formed Ontario Coalition for Better Child Care (OCBCC)¹⁴¹ and developed by the (provincially and

¹⁴¹ Which had formed from various smaller advocating lobbies in 1981 and was instrumental in promoting childcare and received funding from the federal Secretary of State, Women's programmes, within Health and Welfare). The OCBCC secured representation on the Standing Committee on Social Development (1984) which was considering the possibility of a new childcare act and which eventually concluded with 'the rights of women

federally funded) Child Care Resource and Research Unit (CRRU). By 1987, a Liberal-New Democrat (NDP) coalition assigned childcare a high priority. A government initiative known as 'New Directions in Social Policy' would bring childcare to centre stage, informed by an equality of opportunity frame (Goelman, 1992: 250; Friendly, 2006). New Directions promised 'a comprehensive child care system that will meet the needs of all citizens; a system that would move childcare from a welfare connotation toward one of public service' and a 'comprehensive, integrated approach to childcare embodied in the drafting of a new *Child Care Act*' (Kyle, 1991: 431; 482). New Directions was a \$325m three year plan, which implemented wage enhancement grants¹⁴², funded direct operating grants in response to the low levels of compensation in the childcare field, addressed stability in the service sector and also implemented capital grants to provide childcare space in all new build schools¹⁴³ (York, 2005: 45; Kyle, 1991: 433). Under sustained pressure from advocacy lobbies, the operating grants and wage enhancements which had been provided to non-profit and *existing* commercial centres were phased out by the NDP government in 1990. Thereafter, only non-profit/municipal centres were to receive grants¹⁴⁴ (Prentice, 2000: 285). However,

to attain full and equal employment opportunities' (Kyle, 1991: 380). OCBCC also ran a particularly prominent campaign during 1987 called 'kids not cash' attempting to press the provincial government for a comprehensive system of non-profit childcare and provided more research on the lack of quality in commercial centres (by salaries, benefits and working conditions) to press the provincial government to fund direct operating grants to the non-profit sector and to phase out funding to the commercial sector (Rothman and Kass, 1999: 266).

¹⁴² This wage enhancement policy was significant, increasing salaries by \$2,000 resulting in (at that time) Ontario having the second-highest staff salaries in Canada (Tyyskä, 1999: 136).

¹⁴³ This latter policy precipitated a report in 1990 entitled *Early Childhood Education* by the Select Committee on Education which floated but ultimately rejected the idea of the Ministry of Education taking over control of childcare for children from the age of 3.8 which may have established much earlier a basis for policies to integrate early education and childcare (Kyle, 1991: 434).

¹⁴⁴ Precipitating one major commercial provider, Mini-Skools, a division of Kinder-Care Inc to be 'stopped dead in its tracks' and pulled out of expansion in Ontario (Prentice, 2000: 286.).

highlighting the interrelationship between federal/provincial policies, the proposed *Child Care Act*, which could have defined a broader policy framework for EYEC did not get off the ground. Neither did the latter NDP plan to convert for-profit into not-for-profit places, largely because of the failure of the federal bill (and hence funding) and the subsequent CAP restrictions which put limits to growth in childcare funding (Tyyskä, 1999: 137). As the leader of NDP, Bob Rae, commented the federal government ‘chopped every source of funding that Ontario had to run the childcare programs that we had already started’ (Rae, 2001: 65). From the perspective of the childcare advocates and provincial officials working towards securing a more extensive childcare system, much worse was to come and indeed processes of federal bureaucratic and programmatic reform would signal a (re)turn to and the (re)embedding of EYEC policy within a framework characteristic of the residual, liberal welfare model.

4.4 The end of the line for a national childcare plan? Austerity politics, the new public management and the marginalisation of feminist ideas: the liberal social policy model remade

With the failure of the national childcare plan and the limits imposed upon CAP spending, it was apparent that the equality of opportunity frame had lost ground in political circles; moreover, within a general climate of austerity the prospects for social policy expansion appeared increasingly slim. This section traces ‘new public management’ reforms instigated by the federal Progressive Conservatives which further marginalised feminist advocates from the political process. By severing the relationships between external expertise and various government institutions, these reforms would alter processes of (social) policy innovation and consequently close down the spaces for equality of opportunity ideas in the federal

bureaucratic structure. In addition, as both the Progressive Conservatives and Liberals became increasingly pre-occupied with fiscal issues and the burgeoning federal deficit, the federal Finance department would find itself in a position where it was able to take control of and define the whole spectrum of public policy, of which social policy ‘special issues’ such as childcare were just one small part (Nicholson, 2006). Increasingly aggressive cost-cutting measures both precipitated and supported broader neo-liberal retrenchment policies at the provincial level and limited the federal role in shaping future social policy trajectories. Hence as EYEC policy became situated within a residual ‘liberal’ welfare framework and with counter voices marginalised, by the mid to late 1990s, from the vantage point of feminists and many EYEC advocates, the door appeared to be firmly shut against the development of a new national childcare plan. EYEC policy seemed likely to lock into a trajectory of retrenchment.

Whilst it was apparent that the equality of opportunity frame had lost ground in particular *political circles*, the broader bureaucratic structure had continued to support and maintain institutional spaces in which feminist ‘equality of opportunity’ ideas could be articulated. As we have seen, the vibrancy of the Canadian feminist lobby rested to a great extent upon the institutional focal point of the RCSW (latterly the CACSW) and the federal resources devoted to policy analysis and (feminist) advocacy. In particular, the variety of granting mechanisms (primarily from Health and Welfare) had provided a large federal funding base from which to engage both government civil servants with their research and to campaign more broadly. These institutional spaces, moreover, had embedded a set of reciprocal relationships between external expertise and the broader federal policy machinery. Indeed, the various semi-autonomous advisory councils, royal commissions and their economic cousin, the Economic

Council of Canada¹⁴⁵, formed a policy system through which both academic and the broader policy community's expertise could be channelled or input into the policy system and established complementary mechanisms by which the government could, at times, harvest this external research and independent advice in policy formation. Elsewhere in the bureaucratic structure, external research was commissioned and tightly controlled through 'requests for proposals' (RFP) instruments and as such the government defined and delimited the research that was conducted (Bakvis, 2000: 75.). Hence, as Bradford argues, it was the former, relatively autonomous institutional spaces, rather than the broader bureaucratic structure, which were the primary sites for new policy ideas and innovation; injecting policy discourses that in turn become the basis for administrative political action (1998: 159-160.). Whilst governments were not bound by the recommendations made by the advisory councils, they had provided an important ongoing place and a voice for childcare policy, maintaining the issue at the federal level. However, by the early 1990s, this system was under threat from new public management ideas and along with it, the position of feminist childcare advocates and experts working with an equality of opportunities frame.

During the Mulroney era the established bureaucratic emphasis towards institutional 'policy analysis' was subject to significant challenge by new public management ideas, which instead emphasised the virtues of program implementation, management, efficiency and downsizing. Indeed, there was a general feeling that both permanent government officials and to an extent, politicians had been mesmerised by the glamour of policy at the expense of innovative

¹⁴⁵ The Economic Council like the Royal Commission policy instrument, acted semi-independently of the government and provided long term and medium term economic planning advice and was an important source of funding for independent scholarly research on comprehensively defined problems such as education and health, albeit from an economic perspective (Doubuzinkis, 2007: 331.).

management and hence the challenge was to refocus the civil service so as to stress management rather than policy making (Savoie, 2003: 98.). Moreover, in increasingly austere times, it was acknowledged in political circles that the structure of the executive, given its size and a highly fragmented set of portfolios and departments (which often represented highly specific regional and sectoral constituencies), presented a major structural obstacle to expenditure restraint (Aucion, 1995: 119.). Hence as Auction states, by the end of the 1980s, 'it was hardly a state secret, at least in the senior echelons of the public service that some form of substantial restructuring and downsizing was on the horizon' (ibid: 132.). Mulroney duly instigated the 1989 'Public Service 2000' initiative, although initially this had relatively little impact on the structure and size of Canadian civil service, save that 'in house' policy capacity of a number of departments was sidelined and budgets were gradually eroding (ibid: 15; Voyer, 2007: 221). Mulroney's outgoing reform would prove more significant however. In one of his government's last acts, Mulroney abolished 20 of the federal government's arm's length advisory bodies, including the CACSW, but also the 'flagship' Economic Council of Canada¹⁴⁶ and cancelled the Royal Commission policy instrument (Bakvis, 2000: 81). With the loss of what was, for many civil servants important tools for ongoing policy analysis, the civil service monopoly on policy advice (and the external expertise routed through it) was destabilised and instead moves were made to establish 'more responsive' external policy advice direct to the political centre (ibid; Savoie, 2003: 104.). The government was aided in this endeavour by the growth of politically orientated think tanks. Indeed now the advice of public servants was contestable and contested (ibid.). In this way, the relationship between

¹⁴⁶ When the Economic Council was disbanded, the last leader, Judith Maxwell regrouped some of the expert contributors to form the Canadian Policy Research Network (CPRN), a think tank and co-ordinating mechanism linking researchers, policy makers, universities and other think tanks. CPRN would increasingly question the individualisation of neo-liberal economies and stress the need for social cohesion (Dobuzinskis, 2007: 333.).

external expertise and the bureaucracy was severed; now academics and experts would be forced to seek research grants and commissions from individual policy departments and moreover it would not necessarily be the case that any research or policy findings would necessarily be fed back into broader government policy debates and decision making structures.

The task of internal civil service restructuring would be left to the brief tenure of Kim Campbell during 1993 and would further isolate feminist childcare advocacy from the policy process. In the process of seeking to downsize and streamline the federal bureaucracy (and the number of Cabinet portfolios), the department of Health and Welfare was split into two, with Health becoming a stand alone federal department and the smaller, 'welfare' social policy element (including childcare) becoming absorbed into a large and complex department, named Human Resources Development Canada (HRDC)¹⁴⁷. At the centre of HRDC was the department of Employment and Insurance and the Department of Labour, but it also absorbed significant components of the Secretary of State and selected programmes of the Department of Multiculturalism and Citizenship (Good, 2003: 29.). With the dissolution of the CACSW, the remaining federal women's policy machinery including the Women's Programme (which funded the majority of childcare advocacy) was absorbed into a much smaller unit with reduced functions, named 'Status of Women Canada'. Status of Women Canada was made a special unit of a line department within HRDC, now only reporting to a junior minister, who was not a full member of cabinet. The re-organisation thereby greatly reduced the prominence of women's issues and, in this way, the equality of opportunities frame and

¹⁴⁷ Indeed the new department represented half of the government's expenditure budget (\$69 billion in 1993-1994.) (Good, 2003: 29.).

childcare issues within government circles and going forward (Dobrowlsky and Jenson, 2004: 166; Malloy, 2003: 22.). Moreover, with a significantly downsized team, the ability of the federal government to collect provincial childcare data and channel this into federal debates was reduced¹⁴⁸.

Despite the Progressive Conservative's attempts to reduce the influence of 'special interest' groups, such as the childcare lobby, childcare advocates had become hopeful that with the election of the federal Liberals, led by Jean Chrétien, in 1993, that childcare would be brought back as a national priority. Indeed, the Liberal platform, *Creating Opportunity: The Liberal Plan for Canada*, known as the Red Book had promised to reinvigorate the federal social policy presence and within this broad endeavour promised a \$720 million for a federal-provincial cost-shared programme that would expand existing childcare by as much as 150,000 spaces over 3 years if annual economic growth was at 3% and provincial agreement was obtained (Mahon and Phillips, 2002: 202). The new HRDC Minister, Lloyd Axworthy, reignited the debate by producing a discussion paper, *Child Care and Development*, which made a 'commitment to improving Canada's childcare system and to developing a national framework for child care and development' (Friendly, 2001: 34).

The prospects for a new national childcare plan being implemented rapidly faded however, as the Liberal government became increasingly pre-occupied with fiscal issues. Indeed, as had

¹⁴⁸ Martha Friendly of CRRU noted that in a meeting with a federal bureaucrat that she had been asked to collect national data as there wasn't the federal capacity any more (Friendly, 2006). The Status of Daycare reports continued, however, the final report being issued in 1998 and since then there has been no national calculation of numbers of children with mothers in the labour force and the number and auspice of regulated childcare spaces (Doherty, Friendly and Beach, 2003: 82.).

begun with the ‘cap on CAP’, the Mulroney government had been grappling with Canada’s deficit (the ratio of revenue to spending) and by the beginning of 1995 the situation had deteriorated to the extent that the Finance Minister, Paul Martin pressed the case that unless Canada’s debt and deficit were brought under control, the country risked a huge loss of economic confidence ¹⁴⁹(Bashevkin, 2002: 81). In this austere context and with the loss of Economic Council of Canada, the federal Finance Department found itself in a unique position of power to implement wide-ranging cost-containing reforms and to effectively hijack the entire federal policy agenda (Nicholson, 2006.).

In order to rein in government spending, Finance implemented ‘Program Reviews’ across all departments to assess cost-cutting measures within both staffing and policy programmes¹⁵⁰ (Bakvis, 2000: 84.). Indeed it was during program review that the significant civil service retrenchment occurred, although as Arthur Kroger, a former deputy minister, stated this was an entirely unscientific process as ‘there was not much alternative and there was no time for elaborate evaluation studies’ (Savoie, 1999: 181.). Indeed, despite HRDC being in the process of its own social security review, in the absence of significant savings being implemented, Paul Martin imposed flat rate expenditure reductions of \$1.1 billion annually and a 20 per cent cut of its 25,000 staff over three years. These headline cuts hit childcare

¹⁴⁹ Indeed the Finance Minister was aided in this assertion by the publication of an editorial in the Wall Street journal on the 12th January 1995, entitled ‘Bankrupt Canada’ arguing that given its high accumulated government debt and the scrutiny by international financial markets it was not inconceivable that Canada could hit the debt wall and have to call in the IMF to stabilise its failing currency (Savoie, 1998: 178.).

¹⁵⁰ In many ways reviewing programmes involved the privatisation such as the privatisation of Air Canada. Under this review departments were asked to apply six tests, which included the key question of whether the programmes of any given department were ones that should continue and if so whether they should be delivered by the department, by a non-departmental organisation, the private sector or by another level of government (Bakvis, 2000: 82.).

advocacy funding most severely. Indeed, Federal grants to childcare advocacy groups were subject to deep and continuous reductions, hitting the CCAAC who were working at the federal level, particularly hard (Mahon and Phillips, 2002: 205). At the provincial level, the OCBCC lost all base funding from the Status of Women Canada, which now only provided project research funding. Over time, smaller organisations lost all of their funding, even for projects. With the loss of such funding, the OCBCC was forced to focus more on research than advocacy, spend much more time fundraising and to get by with a greatly reduced staff (White, 2001: 113).

Despite the severity of Program Review spending cuts, Finance encroached further into the social policy realm, with a plan to further rein in Federal transfers to the provinces known as the Canada Health and Social Transfer (CHST), announced in the 1995 federal budget (Bakvis, 2000: 84). The Caledon Institute of Social Policy identified CHST as introducing the most profound change to social policy since Canada constructed its social security system in the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s and gave licence to the federal government to get out of the health and welfare business (Friendly, 2001: 36). The elements of the CHST were relatively straightforward. It combined the money from the Established Programs Financing Act (EPF) for health and education and the 'open-ended' CAP cost-sharing function into a single block transfer with few conditions (English and Young, 2006: 60). In effect, it eliminated the legislative basis that had underpinned federal spending in the social area and cut federal transfers to the provinces by \$2.5 billion for 1996-1997 and by an additional \$2 billion for 1997-1998 (ibid). This constituted about a 40% reduction in federal social transfers to the provinces (Bashevkin, 2002: 82).

In such hostile circumstances, where social policy retraction rather than expansion was the order of the day, the mooted ‘childcare plan’ was quickly dropped from the federal agenda¹⁵¹ and neither childcare nor social policy emerged as issues in the 1997 federal election campaign. As Paul Martin’s policy advisor explained,

“what you have to understand is that probably from late 1994 to probably 2000, 2001 even, the Government was completely dominated by finance and they could control the policy agenda across a very broad spectrum.... Also to have tried to mount a new programme when you have already been cutting back on existing transfers, I mean, it would have caused a firestorm” (Nicholson, 2006).

Indeed, the one social policy concession to be announced during the move from CAP to CHST, the National Child Benefit (NCB), betrayed the dominance of Finance¹⁵² over, and its ability to shape, the social policy agenda. Moreover, as some commentators have observed, it had a particularly neo-liberal ‘children at risk’ flavour¹⁵³ (McKeen, 2007). The NCB, a tax measure (and a supplement to the existing means tested Child Tax Benefit) to assist low income families, was designed to ‘build bridges’ between low wage jobs and the world of

¹⁵¹ Although there was one brief proposal for another federal/provincial agreement with the next HRDC Minister, Doug Young at the end of 1995 and beginning 1996 which had briefed the provinces to respond within six weeks whether they would participate in a new childcare agreement. However, in the climate of the time and with what the federal government described as ‘not sufficient interest’ in the proposal the plan was quickly dropped (Friendly, 2001: 37.).

¹⁵² Although the substance of the policy was commissioned and designed by the external social policy think tank, the Caledon Institute.

¹⁵³ Indeed as McKeen argues such policies were clearly situated within a neo-liberal residual framework which emphasized targeting over universality and an individualist frame of employability over collectivist measures (2007: 152.). As the Treasury Board of Canada report outlined the NCB two main goals were to reduce child poverty, promote attachment to the labour market which lends some support to McKeen’s thesis (Ottawa, 2008.).

social assistance, or to ensure that working families would not be penalised when they entered the labour market as they came off social assistance¹⁵⁴ (ibid: 160). With the savings made by reductions in provincial welfare benefits, provinces could re-invest the savings for low income families with children (which could include childcare, social services or healthcare) (Battle and Mandleson, 1997: 1). Whilst some provinces could theoretically use such funds to invest in childcare on top of what they determined they would spend through CHST, the onus was on the provinces to decide policy, representing a further entrenchment of the federal retreat from directing provincial social policy and in this way also, a national childcare plan (Mahon and Phillips, 2002: 207). As a federal cabinet minister explained to the *Globe and Mail* newspaper, ‘we cannot implement a national childcare program; this is not something we have the ability to initiate. In lieu of that we came up with the National Child Benefit’ (Friendly, 2001: 41).

At the provincial level, the election of the Conservative Party in Ontario (within months of the 1995 federal budget) would signal the (re)turn to a residual model for EYEC with significant retrenchment of childcare and early education services which had been built up during the 1970s and 1980s. Elected on a ‘common sense revolution’ platform, the Harris government immediately made moves to cut provincial childcare costs; the NDP plan to convert profit to non-profit auspice was cancelled and between 1995 and 1998 funding for childcare dropped by some 15%; from \$564 million to \$493 million (OCBCC, 2003: 7).

¹⁵⁴ The payment was for low income families earning less than \$22,020 (two parent families) and \$31,753 (family of four) with a maximum payment of \$3,476 (Battle and Mandleson, 1997: 25.).

Whilst the federal funding issue would have inevitably put breaks on growth in provincial EYEC services (as in other provinces funding was maintained or slightly reduced), it was clear that the Harris government were seeking to scale back provincial funding and to promote growth in the commercial sector. As a joint report by the OCBCC and the Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE) stated, childcare was subject to ‘deregulation and privatization, the two cornerstones of the Harris government’s overall social and economic policies’ (OCBCC & CUPE, 2001: 11). This agenda was reflected in the Minister for Community and Social Services, 1996 childcare review report, *Improving Ontario’s Child Care System*, which asserted that childcare should ‘include as many different kinds of quality care as possible’ (1996, cited in Tyyskä, 2001: 139).

The recommendations, which were quickly implemented included; a reduction in the minimum staff and child ratios; a dilution of minimum staff qualifications (e.g. to allow recreation certificates and volunteers); to allow fee subsidies to flow to unregulated programmes (which would therefore include low cost unregulated home care¹⁵⁵); reducing requirements for facilities and licensing enforcements; the elimination of major capital funding for non-profit centres; and lastly and probably the most significant, a re-directing of childcare workers wage subsidies in non-profit centres to fund low income fee subsidies, resulting in wage reductions of up to 25% for 83% of Ontario’s childcare workers (ibid; OCBCC, 2003: 9). In one final blow to prospects for childcare growth, in 1997 it was announced that the traditional cost-sharing agreements between provinces and municipalities

¹⁵⁵ Indeed when the National Child Benefit was introduced Ontario used the reinvested funds to introduce an Ontario Child Care Supplement for Working Families which allowed subsidy fees to flow directly to working parents and principally designed to aid job placement in the Ontario works programme and as such could be used for unregulated childcare programmes (Vosko, 2006: 152.).

which were set at 80% provincial and 20% municipal were now realigned 50/50 in the areas for wage grants, special needs provisions and minor capital program commitments, with all major capital funding eliminated (Tyyskä, 2001: 140). In addition, in 1998 amendments to the *Day Nurseries Act*, sole responsibility for managing and planning childcare and other services was downloaded to municipalities; now municipal governments would be responsible for writing five year service plans without provincial input (CRRU, 1998; Wagle, 2006). Although never formally announced, the provincial government also suspended the year on year inflationary increases to the base money (typically for fee subsidies and other operating grants) from 1995 onwards, severely eroding municipalities ability to maintain existing subsidised childcare places (Patterson, 2006). Hence municipalities were caught between maintaining places and retaining quality, as the Childcare Services Manager for Toronto explained:

“for a number of years we weren’t increasing the rates we were paying to operators, we were making them absorb whatever the increases were in their operating by making them make decisions to cut where they could cut... in the late 1990s programmes started reducing the number of trained staff that they had to a bare minimum and holding off of repairs” (Patterson, 2006).

In many ways, the reforms in childcare created an insidious deterioration over time in both the quality and quantity of childcare services across Ontario. Even then, this was not the only element of EYEC which was subject to significant retrenchment. Indeed, the NDP/Liberal policy to build childcare centres in new schools was reverted in the provincial economic statement in 1995 and it also cancelled any financial support to childcare centres already

created within schools¹⁵⁶ (Johnson and Mathien, 1998: 9). The government also announced that junior kindergarten which had become near universal in Ontario would no longer have to be provided by school boards and funding was cut by 9% in grants per child space. By 1998, 22 boards had exited the programme, resulting in a loss of more than 20,000 junior kindergarten spaces and 1,400 teacher jobs (ibid). Taken together, by the end of the 1990s these reforms left a skeleton set of services and residual rump of EYEC policy which left remaining childcare funding directed to support employment for the most needy families and significantly undermined the capacity of childcare centres to provide the developmental and educative elements of EYEC which had been developing with provincial support and indeed had always been a feature of Ontario's (non-profit) EYEC services.

When taken all together, the federal institutional developments and programmatic retrenchment of EYEC in Ontario radically altered the EYEC policy trajectory. As Mahon and Phillips wrote in 2002:

“a truly national childcare strategy seems as remote as ever... intergovernmental process takes primacy over federal leadership... [ensuring] the protection of jurisdictional autonomy, with a reluctance to create anything national in scope; it also establishes a political process largely closed to the influence of nongovernmental actors’ (2002: 210).

¹⁵⁶ Some 40% of licensed childcare spaces in 1995 were located in schools which presented a severe blow to the EYEC system (Tyyskä, 2001: 138.).

Indeed, the extent and nature of retrenchment is exhibitiv of what Paul Pierson describes as both programmatic (direct attacks on social programmes) and systemic retrenchment (the contextual changes which alter the context for future spending decisions, modifications in institutional design changing the way that decisions over social policy are carried out and the weakening of pro-childcare interest groups) (1994: 146-148). In such hostile and austere political contexts, it may have been expected that Canada's EYEC policy trajectory which was increasingly being re-engineered into a liberal residual model would increasingly lock-in, the state absenting itself from a strong role in children's care and early education and hence any expansion in EYEC left to the private market and informal sectors.

However, as the next chapter will show, whilst all prospects for a national EYEC system constructed through an equality of opportunity frame had appeared to close down, certain institutional developments occurring during the same period would precipitate another 'open space' in the policy process, upon which EYEC policy would once again become an important federal and provincial priority, albeit with reference to a distinctly different set of ideas, evidence and expert actors.

5. CHAPTER FIVE: CHILDCARE IN ONTARIO/CANADA: NEW IDEAS AND EVIDENCE

5.1 Evolving institutions, a national longitudinal study and an open space for ‘evidence-based’ ideas in the federal bureaucracy

It may be considered somewhat ironic that the very process of institutional reform carried out in the early 1990s under the rubric of neo-liberal and NPM ideas which had systematically closed down the spaces for equality of opportunities EYEC frame within the bureaucratic structure, would simultaneously precipitate another period or window of ‘open space’ in the policy process for *other* EYEC ideas and frames and create an avenue for renewed attention towards EYEC policy. However, by retracing the reforms from this time, two key developments at the federal level would re-establish institutional places open to external expertise and mark the embryonic beginnings of an evidence-informed policy making process, structured in such a way to aid the latter ascendancy of evidence-based, scientifically informed EYEC ideas.

Although it was not particularly obvious at the time, several federal initiatives originating during the early 1990s and the broader process of reform in the bureaucratic structure would help establish an institutional base and sow the seeds for the emergence of evidence-informed, social policy analysis within HRDC. The first and perhaps one of the most important, was a joint initiative on behalf of Health and Welfare and Statistics Canada to create a National Longitudinal Study of Children and Youth (NLSCY).

Despite the context of austerity during the early 1990s and moves to retract ‘social Canada’, the decision for Canada to co-host the 1990 World Summit for Children at the United Nations and the subsequent ratification of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child would motivate some federal discussion on the issue of child poverty; indeed at this time all parties committed to the eradication of child poverty by the end of 2000 (Dobrowolsky and Saint-Martin, 2002: 19.). Mahon argues that such an agenda dovetails with a broader neo-liberal residual social policy framework; whilst children do not generally figure large in neo-liberal discourse, there is some, albeit limited, room for remedial state action to ‘save’ children from the cycle of poverty through targeted interventions (Mahon, 2005: 6.). This also leads Jenson (2004) to argue that the attention to *child* poverty marked the beginnings of a specifically child-centred policy agenda (in the absence of broader social rights and equality) and which McKeen (2004) argues was primarily centred on policies for children ‘at risk’. Certainly during this time a limited number of targeted initiatives were developed (and were broadly consistent with the social engineering frame), including ‘Brighter futures’, an umbrella initiative for First Nations and Inuit Communities which led to the development of Aboriginal Head Start on Reserve¹⁵⁷ (McKeen, 2007: 155; Jenson, 2004: 186.). However, these programmes - directly funded and operated by the Federal government - were not extended out to the broader population and did not feed into broader social policy debates. In addition, on the recommendation of a federal report on child abuse, a Children’s Bureau was established within Health and Welfare with a specific mandate and function ‘as the

¹⁵⁷ Brighter Futures is described by a Government of Canada report as a programme which ‘assists First Nations and Inuit communities in developing culturally appropriate programs for community mental health, child development, injury prevention, parenting and healthy babies...Communities may use the funding for awareness and prevention activities related to such matters as family violence, suicide and its aftermath, counselling and parenting courses, as well as cultural activities (Canada, 2005: 67).

responsibility centre within the federal government for a broad range of children's interests', which included child poverty and abuse, but primarily looked at children's policy from a health perspective ¹⁵⁸(Canada, 1990.).

However, to argue that the NLSCY project itself was necessarily situated within this broader neo-liberal 'children-at-risk' agenda and would therefore potentially generate evidence which would focus policy towards socio-economic profiles of risk (and perhaps support the social engineering frame and lend weight to developing targeted EYEC policies across the broader Canadian population), would not be strictly accurate. Indeed although the NLSCY originated from within the Children's Bureau, it had much broader aims. As Laurie Goldman from the NLSCY project noted:

“There was a growing recognition that we really didn't have an understanding of children in Canada. If you looked at a lot of our national data sources, they pick people up at 15 years of age, so we didn't have any read detailed depth data sources about how children in Canada were doing, what their development was like... it is much broader than focusing on a specific target population, it's focusing on children as a whole and looking at their development (Goldman, 2006).

Indeed, as had been elaborated earlier, the Cooke report and Parliamentary Special Committee had noted the lack of a specific evidence base on children's development and hence, the NLSCY's objective, rather than investigating the effects of particular (social) policies *upon*

¹⁵⁸ Indeed as one federal bureaucrat noted some *internal* social policy capacity and the new Children's Bureau had been situated within the Health side of Health and Welfare as this was modelled upon and consistent with the practices of the World Health Organisation (Westlake, 2006).

children or studying particular (socio-economic) risk groups, was to establish a national database on the characteristics and life experiences of all children and youth in Canada, examining a variety of factors influencing child growth and development. The NLSCY's focus was to capture a range of environmental influences on child development and as such was not explicitly designed to capture the effects of different types of EYEC on outcomes (simply capturing whether children were in non-parental care or at home)¹⁵⁹. Its main goals were to provide data to support longitudinal analysis on the prevalence various biological, social and economic characteristics among children and youth, including the environments in which they live and to support diagnoses of the reasons for poor outcomes and predictors of good outcomes. In this way, the NLSCY would support the understanding of broad factors affecting child development and well-being and the way they influence child outcomes (ARB, 1999: 2). The original cohort was 0-11 and first picked up in 1994, the idea being that the NLSCY would track the same children until they were 24-5 (Goldman, 2006). It would also be an open source of data for academics who wished to use the data in their own research and publish papers (ibid).

The second key institutional development and which would have important implications for the first, was the creation of an Applied Research Branch within HRDC as part of the major consolidation of federal departments that took place in the early 1990s. As part of this reorganisation (and perhaps somewhat unexpectedly), the health orientated Children's Bureau

¹⁵⁹ Information was collected on a wide variety of outcomes; health, language, cognitive, social, emotional, behavioural determinants against characteristics of the child's family; socio-economic status, structure, parenting style, family functioning, social support, non-parental care (hence NLSCY did not distinguish by type of 'non-parental care' or as such specifically types of childcare), school and neighbourhood. Outcomes were measured both by direct assessments of vocabulary, maths and reading skills along with qualitative interviews and reports from the key people in the child's life, parents, teachers, principals (Brink and McKeller, 2000: 111-2).

along with Health and Welfare's small social policy department were absorbed into HRDC. Both were consolidated within a larger 'Strategic Policy' division of the newly created 'Applied Research Branch' (ARB) which anchored around the nucleus of the old Employment and Immigration policy team. Whilst the move entailed the loss of the separate identity of the Children's Bureau and hence may have appeared regressive for children's and broader social policy issues, as a federal bureaucrat noted, 'social policy things had always felt like the carbuncle on the big ship in both cases' (Westlake, 2006.). The change of context however was much more significant in shaping the emerging children's policy capacity at the federal level; shifting the strategic focus of the children's policy team, broader social policy planning and small projects (including the NLSCY) from a primarily health perspective to a broader employment, skills and learning context (Westlake, 2006). In this way, it widened the potential (policy) ideas linked to 'children's services' and also the types of evidence and expertise which could be utilised in children's policy analysis and discussions. Indeed, now both social and children's policy was situated within a multidisciplinary policy research and management team, covering labour market, human capital development, income security, social development, labour market innovation issues (Voyer, 2007: 228).

Whilst in effect a cost-cutting and streamlining 'NPM' initiative, the creation of the ARB would offer some protection against latter Program Review cuts, having incurred a significant downsizing during the consolidating process and also through particularly creative efforts to regroup remaining research resources to retain critical masses of policy capacity (Voyer, 2007: 229.). Indeed the ARB would become an important institutional locus upon which to begin to rebuild both internal (social) policy capacity and external relationships with academic and other outside policy communities. In particular the Strategic Policy division

would regroup a critical mass of what Howlett terms ‘policy analytical capacity’; the ability of government to conduct or access research in order to acquire knowledge to be utilised in the policy process (2009: 162.). However it was clear that this re-shaping of (social) policy capacity would privilege a particular form of knowledge. Indeed it would establish a basis within the federal bureaucratic structure for ‘evidence-based’ social policy initiatives.

Building upon the Employment and Immigration’s model for managing mid-term policy research which encouraged fact-based research, surveys, program evaluation and advanced modelling techniques and interpretation, Strategic Policy took the policy lead for the NLSCY project and was charged with developing social policy ideas in conjunction with the research outcomes from NLSCY evidence (Canada, 1996; Goldman, 2006). Whilst some of this policy work remained ‘in house’, the open source nature of the NLSCY data meant that interested researchers working with the data could potentially establish collaborative links with the ARB team; thus establishing a new opening in the bureaucratic structure - albeit narrow - for external policy communities and academics in social policy planning.

The ARB was uniquely positioned to secure increasing federal funding and prominence as the Liberal government sought to correct the perceived lack of mid and long term policy capacity across government in the wake of both their own and the previous administration’s ‘NPM’ inspired cost-cutting measures and with the loss of other sites of policy innovation such as the royal commissions and advisory councils. Indeed, within just two years of the Liberals return to power, concern was expressed amongst senior officials¹⁶⁰ over the government’s ability to

¹⁶⁰ Most notably by Jocelyn Bourgon, Secretary to Cabinet and Clerk of the Privy Council 1994-1999 who mandated the launch of the Ministerial task force and Arthur Kroger a former deputy minister involved in Program Review who stated “In hindsight we made some bad decisions. I do not for example think that we

generate ideas and to manage the policy process (Bakvis, 2000: 90). It appeared that the pendulum had swung too far in direction of economic efficiency at the expense of policy innovation and broader policy effectiveness. A special Deputy Minister task force led by the government's chief statistician, Ivan Fellegi, was launched in response at the end of 1995. Rather than reinstate the semi-autonomous, partisan councils¹⁶¹, the task force report, *Strengthening Our Policy Capacity* recommended significant investments within *in-house* internal research capacity, noting that the ARB was an exception to the (policy deficit) rule and had the promising beginnings of a strong long term forward planning and research unit¹⁶² (Canada, 1996: 5). The particular support for the ARB's emerging 'evidence-based' policy innovation model was underpinned by a specific conception that good policy advice is empirical, quantifiable, and objective and technical¹⁶³. As the report states:

“an aspect of policy analysis requiring greater attention is the rigorous assessment of the expected outcomes in both qualitative and whenever possible, quantitative terms. Lack of rigour diminishes the value of analysis, weakens the decision process and makes subsequent evaluation tenuous and subjective” (Canada, 1996: 6.).

should have cut research and development as much as we did but we had to move quickly... we were under the gun there is not question about that”(Bakvis, 2000: 87; Savioe, 1999: 177.).

¹⁶¹ Owing to the perceived cost and apparent unmanageability. Indeed the last two royal commission's prior to abolition of the policy instrument had as Bakvis argues 'taken on nightmarish qualities, with public conflicts among commissioners, long delays and huge cost overruns' (Bakvis, 2000: 81.).

¹⁶² As the report stated 'Human Resources Development Canada has dedicated resources to defining its longer term policy research agenda, including the definition of its statistical needs as part of its strategic planning' (Canada, 1996: 6.).

¹⁶³ And perhaps therefore reflecting the particular positivist paradigm in which the discipline of statistics is situated.

In so doing, the Felligi report reinforced this conceptual shift in social policy analysis within the federal government. It moreover reinforced the importance of developing relationships with academic and other external experts as ‘a way to contribute to the quality of public policy across Canada at a relatively small cost’ and especially with regards to ‘considering major horizontal issues of public policy’ ¹⁶⁴(ibid: 33-34). In this way, the ARB established an important institutional site and an ‘open space’ in the policy process for the (re) emergence of external (and internal) evidence and experts in the policy generating process and a particular form of policy innovation privileging outcomes focused, evidence-based ideas (Brink and McKeller, 2000: 111).

5.2 The importance of the early years: the rise of the CIAR and the ascendance of the Neuroscience EYEC frame at federal and provincial levels

It would become increasingly apparent that there indeed were particular external researchers, academics and expert bodies who were seeking to both exploit the data from the NLSCY and keen to infiltrate and shape the federal (social) policy agenda. In particular, researchers from the Canadian Institute for Advanced Research (CIAR) were primed with just the kind of outcomes driven and ‘evidence-informed’ policy research that the ARB was seeking to acquire in order to inform and advise the federal government on mid and long term policy and were quick to fill the policy vacuum. Indeed in the early 1990s, the CIAR president, Dr

¹⁶⁴ To this effect, although Strategic Policy in conjunction with the NLSCY statistics team were already sharing data, in 1998 a national task force, the Canadian Initiative on Social Statistics, recommended the creation of research facilities to give academic researchers improved access to Statistics Canada’s micro-data files to allow researchers in the social sciences to build expertise in quantitative methodology and analysis and to improve the availability of ‘rigorous’, policy relevant research (Voyer, 2007: 226.).

Fraser Mustard¹⁶⁵, a medical doctor and researcher by training and somewhat of an ‘early years’ activist, set up a Human Development Group within CIAR, bringing together leading North American researchers from a range of health, education and social science backgrounds (Pence and Benner, 2000: 151). CIAR members¹⁶⁶ formed a small yet internally heterogeneous ‘early years development network’ who were exploring (international) ideational developments in ‘early years’ evidence, including the latest scientific neuroscientific ‘brain’ evidence and population health ideas which stressed the ‘critical’ importance of the early years for subsequent health, education and other developmental outcomes. With the advent of the NLSCY data base, CIAR researchers were beginning to investigate the application of neuroscientific and also educative ideas¹⁶⁷ to social policy research specific to the Canadian context¹⁶⁸.

As has been discussed in the first chapter, the application of neuroscientific frame with regards to specific EYEC policy programmes, is relatively diffuse (although narrowed to the earliest years), including various social policies such as maternal health/foetal development,

¹⁶⁵ Fraser Mustard was the Dean and Vice-President of Health Sciences, McMaster University from 1972 to 1982, and was the founding president of the Canadian Institute for Advanced Research (CIAR) from 1982 to 1996 (McCain and Mustard, 1999: 1.).

¹⁶⁶ In particular the work of Doug Willms, Dan Offord, Richard Tremblay, George Cleveland and Michael Krashinsky, Clyde Hertzman, along with Fraser Mustard himself, would make important contributions to the broad ‘early years’ research efforts within CIAR and Canada.

¹⁶⁷ In this case measuring kindergarten on future cognitive outcomes

¹⁶⁸ Even though with the NLSCY being so new, researchers could only make some preliminary conclusions (or effects over 2-4 years) on the effects of various ‘environmental’ influences (including non parental care) on subsequent educative, behavioural and emotional development (as was discussed in the first chapter see Hertzman and Cohen 1998; Lipps and Yiptong-Avila, 1999; McCain and Mustard, 1999). Indeed as was discussed in the first chapter, the relative infancy of neuroscientific ‘science’ and the use of experimental scientific data meant that for the most part, it was simply neuroscientific theory which informed particular social policy discourses and frameworks, as opposed to a strict definition of ‘evidence-based’ practice.

early years education and child development and enrichment programmes. Being in its infancy, the neuroscientific frame was lacking in a fully worked, prescriptive or integrated policy model or system for EYEC; in many ways the various evidential threads rationalised various *discrete* early years enrichment, development and health programmes. Despite the ideational complexity, when considered together, these ‘scientific’ ideas made a powerful discursive imperative for broad investments and policy interventions in the early years of children’s lives and highlighted a broad social policy deficit in this area. Indeed, the neuroscientific frame challenges the state to actively support *all* parents in children’s early development and health, as opposed to only stepping in to support those traditionally profiled ‘at risk’ and only becoming fully responsible for children’s early education in later childhood (through formal schooling). The consequences of allowing a general ‘developmental deficit’ would be stark. Indeed as a member of the NLSCY policy team noted ‘the notion of the little brains getting hard wired, that language was really compelling and I think that it had a huge impact’¹⁶⁹(Goldman, 2006).

At the federal level, the NLSCY and the collaborative work with Strategic Policy would provide an avenue into the federal structure to establish the CIAR as an influential external policy network and a place where ‘scientific’ neuroscientific ideas would resonate and hence become perceived as credible. Indeed, as federal bureaucrat Lynne Westlake noted of Fraser Mustard’s advocating activities:

¹⁶⁹ Indeed by constructing a ‘critical’ need for early intervention, there is a sense that remedial social and educative policies would be rendered ineffective and as such, leaving children’s early years as the preserve of parents and varying degrees of early enrichment and non-specialist ‘nurture’ would be dangerous indeed.

“I was working in the Children’s Bureau in 1990 and the person who was managing it said come take a look at this guy, some of his theories are way out there, at that point he has a long medical and academic record but as a player and a thinker whose thinking would shape public policy, he wasn’t on the landscape, but by 1996 he had a huge influence” (2006).

The culmination of collaborative efforts was the HRDC conference, *Investing in Children: A National Research Conference*, convened in October 1998 and marked the embedding of neuroscientific and educative frames for EYEC within HRDC’s research framework. Its objective was ‘to showcase the most recent NLSCY research on children and families and to engage researchers, practitioners and policy makers in discussion on the application of these findings to policy and program development’ (ARB, 1999: 1). Fraser Mustard’s closing address, presented the major neuroscientific findings which stated that ‘brain development occurs largely before the age of five... [hence] a lack of intervention and prevention strategies leads to much higher social and economic costs later on’ (ARB, 1999: 4). Regarding potential policy frameworks, Mustard presented the case for introducing universal EYEC programmes ‘to avoid creating an ‘us versus them’ mentality’ and also partly due to the extremely technical nature of the neuroscientific frame’s conception of early learning and development, which necessitated *universal* enhancement of ‘parenting skills’ to develop children’s early capacity (ibid.). Hence it was imperative to ‘encourage the federal government to support all parents through more parent education programs, parental leave and to support early child development programs’ (ibid.). Moreover as a CIAR member Clyde Hertzman demonstrated from NLSCY the developmental payoffs would be realised across society:

“The gradient in child development in Canada demonstrates that there is room for improvement in the environments in which most children grow up, right across the socio-economic spectrum and not just for those traditionally considered ‘high risk’”(2000: 15.).

These (policy) ideas were taken up by the report compiled from the conference which concluded that ‘the early years are crucial to setting the stage for social, emotional and cognitive development’ and on the basis of the compiled research recommended the development of various ‘support initiatives [which] would include prenatal nutrition and education; home visiting programs; pre-school education; mobile and satellite community programs’ (ibid: 109). Moreover, that these ‘programs and policies supporting early child development should have a universal component where first and foremost all families are supported’ (ibid). Notably absent in the conclusions of the report was the issue of (custodial) childcare and how this might fit into an EYEC policy framework, aid children’s development or contribute to gender equality. In part, NLSCY data was not particularly helpful in this regard having not been designed to capture the different childcare/early years settings¹⁷⁰; but the focus of the majority of CIAR members, following educative and neuroscientific ideas

¹⁷⁰ Indeed as one ARB policy study noted it was difficult to ascertain the effects of different forms of childcare on development as the NLSCY measure ‘non parental care’ could not establish particular developmental outcomes from different settings. The study recommended to the NLSCY team that NPC (Non Parental Care) be differentiated by structural indices of quality, centre-based/home-based care (Conner and Brink, 1999, p.27.). As the ARB conference report noted childcare was a ‘controversial topic’ and the submitted paper by Kohen and Hertzman (1999) and it was difficult to ascertain clear benefits of childcare on developmental outcomes, suffice to say that those children who did attend some hours of non-parental ‘EYEC settings’ outside the home showed improved cognitive skills (ARB, 1999: 29.).

were ambivalent towards centre-based care for very young children¹⁷¹ and hence a strong discourse of early development and education rather than care prevailed in the conference findings.

It was also clear that the work of the CIAR and in particular, Fraser Mustard, was becoming influential at the provincial level. Indeed, following an exposition piece in national newspaper the *Globe and Mail*¹⁷², Mustard quickly established links with the Ontario Progressive Conservatives, presenting to the caucus before the 1995 election (Senate, 2008). Mustard was subsequently appointed as the Premier's council on Economic renewal (an advisory body) and asked to review the research on the life-long impact of child development (Saint-Martin, 2007: 292). The result was *Reversing the Real Brain Drain: The Early Years Study* co chaired by Fraser Mustard and Margaret McCain, reporting in early 1999.

The Early Years synthesised Mustard's reading of the neuroscience 'story' and sought to recommend what steps the Ontario government could take to develop 'vision for an early child development and parenting framework to improve the outcomes for the early years for children in all sectors of society' (McCain and Mustard, 1999: 3). The key issue for the report is the importance of neuroscientific evidence which according to Mustard's reading rationalises 'the need for a continuum of parent-focused and child-focused activities for

¹⁷¹ Indeed for very young children, Mustard in particular appeared to assume that parental care would be most appropriate for development and as such claimed that 'parenting is what matters' (ARB, 1999: 4.).

¹⁷² As Mustard explained to the Senate Committee on Social Affairs, Science and Technology, a university in Winnipeg had asked him to give a paper at conference on the university role in a knowledge-based societies and Mustard chose brain development in the very early years. In a fortuitous twist of fate a reporter from the *Globe and Mail* was present and owing to a general shortage of other stories the *Globe and Mail* put the article on the front page precipitating a significant amount of government and broader academic interest (Senate, 2008).

optimum brain development in the early years’¹⁷³ (ibid. 1). As Mustard previously revealed at the HRDC conference and which was also elaborated within *The Early Years*, was a particular ambivalence towards custodial care and by virtue of this, gender-based concerns. Indeed, rather than viewing an EYEC policy as a fully integrated system or a ‘policy synthesis’ of both developmental *and* custodial care (therefore retaining a crucial role for Ontario’s childcare centres and rationalising an augmentation of existing developmental components), *Early Years* instead makes the case for a variety of discrete EYEC child development programmes which help primarily help *parents* to develop their children’s cognitive capacities in the *very early years*. Indeed as the report makes clear ‘early child development’ can occur in a variety of settings, however:

“It is not the setting that defines early child development; it is the activities. In our view, activities must focus on parent interaction with their children and play-based problem solving with other children that stimulate early brain development through the sensing pathways” (ibid: 37; 52.).

In some ways, directing the policy rationale towards parents makes sense in the context of the neuroscientific evidence which casts policy attention down towards the earliest period of life (indeed to pre-birth also)¹⁷⁴ but the assumption that parents will be and should be the primary source of both care and early child development is specific to Mustard’s reading which

¹⁷³ As the report states ‘evidence that children who do not receive the nutrition and stimulation necessary for good development in the earliest months and years of life may have great difficulty overcoming deficits later’ (McCain and Mustard, 1999: 6).

¹⁷⁴ As Mustard explained to the sub-committee on children and youth ‘experience-based brain development is crucial in utero and during the first three to four years of life... early brain development affects not only your capacity to learn and your behaviour, it effects significant health risks (SCYR, 2002).

informs this policy framework¹⁷⁵. In this way, *Early Years* recommends the development of ‘Early Child Development and Parenting Centres’, the central components of which would include universal early child development and parenting activities at the centre; home visiting; home-based satellites and early problem identification and intervention (ibid: 21). As the *Early Years* makes clear:

“The evidence is clear that good early child development programs that involve parents or other primary caregivers of young children can influence how they relate to and care for children in the home and can vastly improve outcomes for children's behaviour, learning and health in later life. The earlier in a child's life these programs begin, the better. These programs can benefit children and families from all socio-economic groups in society” (ibid: 44.).

Following the neuroscientific rationale (which articulates common developmental outcomes) a universal approach to early development would be necessary (with extra provisions for

¹⁷⁵ Indeed as *The Early Years* takes Kohen, Hertzman's and Willms analysis of NLSCY data of childcare and subsequent outcomes in a forthcoming chapter in Willms (2002) ed, which found that for low income and middle income children, attendance in care outside of the home resulted in increases in vocabulary skills on the PPVT-R test and concluded that these findings ‘suggest the important of making high-quality care arrangements available to all Canadian children who need them’ and as such stress the importance of integrated care and development aspects of EYEC whilst McCain and Mustard read this evidence as rationalising ‘support outside the home’ neglecting the care element (Kohen, Hertzman, Willms, 2002: 275; McCain and Mustard, 1999: 83.). Indeed Mustard's conception of parental support and interaction would appear to assume a significant amount of time, ‘parenting involvement is more than occasional visit to see how the child is doing at the pre-school program...the early child development programs that involve parents will help them be better educators’ (McCain and Mustard, 1999: 37.).

those with physical risk profiles¹⁷⁶), hence policy would establish ‘clear principles for early child development and parenting centres, but multiple strategies with a universal outcome measure’ (ibid: 171). Rather than advocating ‘a centralised bureaucratic model’ to ensure this, with the intention to support community choice (and diversity) *Early Years* recommends ‘involving the private sector as well as the public sector’ (ibid: 171-2.). However, this approach entailed an apparent tension between a standardising universal vision or outcome and a possible divergence (and quality variability) in implementation.

As such, at both federal and provincial levels, through an institutional openness to evidence-based ideas, CIAR research filtering into the ARB policy planning unit and a powerful ‘scientific’ discourse forwarded by an advocating actor who had particular credibility within various political circles¹⁷⁷, significant ideational pressures were being generated regarding the necessity of investments in the early years. Indeed, as a federal bureaucrat noted regarding Fraser Mustard, ‘I mean he was a doctor who’d had medical training; he wasn’t some sociologist sitting in an office somewhere’ (Goldman, 2006.). As has been discussed, the growing dominance of the neuroscientific frame and especially Mustard’s particular reading of it, was acting to further mitigate ‘equality of opportunities’ ideas at the provincial level and, to a lesser extent, the federal level (where a broader range of EYEC evidence and ideas were circulating). In both contexts, with an overt focus upon stimulating children’s early ‘neural’ development, the ‘care’ element of EYEC policy (and indeed the importance of care

¹⁷⁶ But as *Early Years* asserts, health targeting within a universal approach does not profile risk through a socio-economic measure (McCain and Mustard, 1999: 16-17.).

¹⁷⁷ As a federal bureaucrat noted the provincial *Early Years* report was both influential at the federal level (in some part due to significant national media coverage) in addition to simply being a provincial concern (Westlake, 2006).

to children's wellbeing) had receded and with this, the idea that EYEC should provide both integrated (custodial *and* developmental) 'care' and 'education'. Hence *childcare* and indeed in some ways also, kindergarten, were just other (satellite) policy programmes that could broadly be associated with 'early years' programme but were not a central part of the 'early years development' message nor the emerging policy agenda within HRDC. In this way, the growing complexity of EYEC policy and particular discursive tensions between the equality of opportunity frame and the neuroscientific frame set up an opposition between the early child development network and childcare advocates, who were seeking divergent paths to policy action, rather than forging a common policy consensus.

5.3 Social policy expansions in an era of austerity: early years 'evidence-based' policy innovations at the federal and provincial levels

The debate over EYEC and early years evidence in the late 1990s that had arisen by virtue of the work of the ARB and the CIAR occurred in a somewhat timely context which dovetailed with a broader agenda within the federal government to (re)develop its social (and economic) capacity in the aftermath of the fiscal conservatism wrought by the deficit crisis. Much academic debate has sought to characterise and position the Liberal's renewed attention towards social policy and particularly 'early years' policy, in this seemingly austere context. Some authors have identified these social policy developments as conditioned by, or a exhibiting a new phase of, the prevailing neo-liberal order¹⁷⁸ (Mahon and Phillips, 2002;

¹⁷⁸ Often by picking up on elements of policy which target 'at risk' populations, such as the health aspects of EYEC, the neglect of gender concerns or construe attention to children as fitting within a broader neo-liberal paradigm which eschews equality across class and gender lines but retains a sympathy for children. Whilst in

McKeen, 2007). Others argue that these endeavours aimed to forge a third way (Bashevkin, 2002) or exhibit a transition towards the reconciliation of economic and social concerns and to address ‘new social risks’¹⁷⁹ through a social investment approach, informed by human capital ideas (Dobrowolsky and Jensen, 2004; Jensen and Saint-Martin, 2003; 2006; Dobrowolsky, 2006; Saint-Martin, 2007). Whilst most authors would agree that in the post-deficit era, Canada’s social architecture had been profoundly altered in both material and discursive terms, and hence a wholesale return to the post-war social democratic ideals was unlikely, this theoretical disagreement is telling, and as Dobrowolsky perceptively notes, reflects perhaps an uneven and complex process of restructuring (2006: 182.). Indeed ideological/policy paradigms do not simply fall from the sky, nor occur in a vacuum and hence reflect the complex responses of reflexive agents intervening and developing strategies to deal with the intended and unintended consequences of ongoing institutional and programmatic reforms and negotiating the policy spaces and gaps in between. Moreover it is greatly reflective of the complexity exhibited by competing EYEC frames and hence the discursive instability of EYEC policy discourse, where multiple frames and policy frameworks rationalise in places universal collectivist approaches, or centre (and target) policy attention upon specific (often age-specific) clienteles.

In many ways, a highly contingent ‘perfect storm’ of institutional and ideational developments was unfolding, producing a strategic context highly conducive to social policy

some ways plausible, the qualitative texture of EYEC policy as framed by particular evidential frames, cuts across different ideological paradigms and does not necessarily fit within any one.

¹⁷⁹ These can be summarised as the income and service gaps generated by the transition to post-industrial labour markets and societies, the decline of well paid and traditionally male industrial jobs and an increase in low-paid and often precarious service jobs as well as a rise of the female employment rate overall (Jenson and Saint-Martin, 2006: 430.).

innovation and change at the federal level and which favoured and, to an extent, was reciprocally shaped by the ongoing (evidence-based) policy work within HRDC, centred around the evidence of the neuroscientific frame. Indeed the federal project of social policy reconstruction was situated in an emerging broader performance regime which emphasised an evidence-based and outcomes driven agenda (Aucion and Heintzman, 2000: 255.). As had developed initially within HRDC and spread across government circles, was a growing constituency for a strong focus on measurement, evaluation and public reporting of outcomes¹⁸⁰ (MacLeod, 2001: 77.). Moreover, following the Felligi report, (which had sought to strengthen internal policy capacity) a policy capacity task force was tasked with co-ordinating horizontal, future orientated policy and to identify ‘the pressure points which are likely to arise in Canadian society by 2005 as a result of economic, demographic and social trends’ which could then feed into a broad ‘innovation strategy’ aimed at revitalising Canada’s flagging economy (Canada, 1996a; Stewart, 2006). From the two reports produced¹⁸¹, the key pressure points were identified as ‘growth, human development and social cohesion’ in the context of an increasingly ‘globalized and knowledge-based’ economy (Canada, 1997: i.). In this context, HRDC’s EYEC work appeared as an ideal piece of evidence-based policy of which particular (social, educative and economic) outcomes and payoffs could be modelled and could be *strategically* attached to background work for

¹⁸⁰ Indeed as Good comments 1997 was the year for results in the government’s capital with all federal departmental agencies required to submit performance reports to Parliament, following HRDC’s efforts in 1996 to put in place a results-based accountability framework which established twelve key performance measures for its four major program areas, along with a series of secondary measures to monitor operations (Good, 2003: 40.).

¹⁸¹ The first report, *Growth, Human Development, Social Cohesion*, 1996 and followed up by *Canada 2005, Global Challenges and Opportunities* 1997.

Canada's innovation strategy under the theme of lifelong learning¹⁸². Hence, as the HRDC Minister (1999-2003) Jane Stewart described, in the context of 'a more economically perceived agenda, the timely dovetailing of this [research work] was like gasoline on the fire, the policy directions were crystallising themselves very well' (ibid.).

The elaboration of an evidence-based, outcomes focused, social policy agenda first becomes visible through the two year exploratory dialogue between the Federal-Provincial-Territorial Council of Ministers on Social Policy Renewal, chaired by the HRDC Minister¹⁸³ to create a National Children's Agenda (NCA), agreed in May 1999 (NCA, 1999). The NCA sought to define a 'comprehensive strategy to improve the well-being of Canada's children' and although initially comprised a broad vision statement which included children up to the age of 18 and involved an equally broad range of stakeholders, through the influence of the CIAR within HRDC and neuroscientific ideas, the focus quickly turned to early childhood development, 'with the direction provided by research' and more specifically;

"strong evidence, including scientific research that what happens to children when they are very young shapes their health and well-being throughout their lifetime.

Science has proven what we have intrinsically known all along; healthy children grow into healthy, successful adults who will shape our future" (NCA, 1999).

¹⁸² Jane Stewart stated that whilst the Innovation Strategy would typically be driven by Industry Canada, HRDC was able to force a partnership during the process, arguing that a critical component of any innovation strategy should involve people. Following what was described as 'tough policy work', the policy team settled upon a 'lifelong learning' theme and were able to attach HRDC work on early years (Stewart, 2006).

¹⁸³ Which initially was Pierre S Pettigrew but taken over by Jane Stewart in 1999.

Indeed as Jane Stewart noted ‘a big shift was having the early years studies, having good longitudinal data, having an empirical basis for what intuitively people would just know, changed the tenor completely’ (2006). As such, the 1999 Speech from the Throne indicated that the 2000 budget would be a children’s budget. HRDC were given the go ahead to work with Health and Justice Departments to develop a framework for EYEC policy with the Provinces, which would form the first and an integral plank of a new federal/provincial Social Union Framework Agreement (SUFA); an intergovernmental commitment to ‘make social programmes more efficient and effective’ and ‘to promote equality of opportunity for all Canadians’ (NCA, 1999; Social Union, 1999).

SUFA codified and concretised what Phillips describes as the new ‘instrumental federalism’. As the Treasury Board Secretariat commented, the essence of SUFA is ‘doing what works for Canadians’ (Phillips, 2001: 8.). Indeed, there would be no more blank cheques from government; social policies and investments would have to demonstrate measurable ‘results’ and performance outcomes which could be publicly reported, although with CHST block transfer method, it would be primarily for the public to hold Provincial governments to account on how the money was spent (MacLoed, 2001: 77.). Ultimately this placed evidence at the centre of policy making, indeed SUFA contained specific language on this point; ‘research, knowledge and information are the foundations of evidence-based decision-making and are critical to informed policy development’ (Social Union, 2000).

As has been discussed in the preceding discussion, the ascendance of neuroscientific ideas of early child development had brought EYEC policy to the top of the federal agenda and the particular influence of this frame is clearly inscribed upon the first federal agreement on

EYEC policy, the Early Child Development Agreement, (ECDA) signed in September 2000, which aimed to ‘promote early childhood development so that, to their fullest potential, children will be physically and emotionally healthy, safe and secure, ready to learn and socially engaged and responsible’ (Canada, 2000.). The embedding of a strong discourse of child development and education within HRDC’s conception of EYEC policy and which elaborated through federal and provincial negotiations had led to a particular focus on the health and educative side of early development and discrete parenting and family supports at the community level whilst sidelining the ‘care’ aspect of EYEC and in this way the notion of an integrated system. Indeed, the eventual agreement committed \$2.2 billion (over five years) to be shared between the Provinces for investment in four key areas; promoting healthy pregnancy, birth and infancy; improving parenting and family supports; community supports; and strengthening early childhood development, learning and care, for young children, prenatal to age 6 (Canada, 2000).

The investment area of ‘early child development, learning and care’ had been a particular sticking point in the development of a federal agreement and in many ways entailed a compromise between Provinces which were seeking to develop a base of childcare and early years infrastructure¹⁸⁴ and other Provinces such as Ontario who (following the embedding of the neuroscientific rationale) vigorously argued that an early child development agreement should be exclusive of a broader childcare system and funding (Stewart, 2006). In any case, the ECDA was specific in its choice of language; that where investments in (existing)

¹⁸⁴ As Jane Stewart explained, the Provinces were starting from very different places and hence in some Provinces in Atlantic Canada the priority was to develop infrastructure and increase wages as a first step, whereas other places (such as Western Canada and in many ways, Ontario) had already developed systems which could subsequently be augmented or developed upon (2006.).

programmes were made they should be directed towards children, to ‘promote healthy development, provide opportunities for interaction and play and help prepare children for school’ without reference to incorporating a custodial service for (working) women (Canada, 2000). Hence it was apparent that the position of childcare advocates, who had steadfastly argued for a regulated non-profit (centre-based) childcare system, against the prevailing discourse of child development and parental support, had been marginalised¹⁸⁵. As HRDC Minister Jane Stewart had noted:

“one of the biggest successes was moving it away from a gender-based strategy [and] we were fighting all the time that it was child development and not women in the workforce only” (2006.).

The neuroscientific and educative EYEC frames had the added benefit of being clearly operationalisable in conjunction with SUFA principles to report comparable indicators of policy outcomes or ‘effectiveness’ generated by federal investment. Indeed, as part of the agreement, the Provinces agreed to report annually (to their citizens) upon early childhood development expenditures along the four investment areas and to develop a shared reporting framework of ‘child wellbeing’ by 2002 (Canada, 2000). The devised framework measured

¹⁸⁵ As the Minister, Jane Stewart had noted there was particular divisions between the early child development and health experts on one side and childcare advocates, who had adopted a position of ‘childcare, nothing more, nothing less’, so rather than coming together cohesively and ‘hammering out a recommendation’ for the government, representatives remained divided. This is in contrast to Mahon and Phillips (2002) view that coalitions formed to increase the ‘bandwidth of the message’ or that the federal government had followed the ‘politics of pragmatism’ by choosing to base its claims on a discourse of child development assuming this strategy would stand a greater chance of success rather than a tighter focus on childcare (see Jenson, Mahon, Phillips, 2003: 145.).

11 common indicators¹⁸⁶ from five main dimensions of child wellbeing; physical health and motor development; emotional health; social knowledge and competence; cognitive learning; and language communication¹⁸⁷ (Canada, 2002.). In many ways, these prescriptive measures underlay a rather narrow, instrumental goal and future-orientated conception of children's wellbeing and childhood; policy was directed at children certainly, but not specifically child-centred in the sense that policy would attend to their holistic needs and present well-being. Indeed the neuroscientific and educative discourse constructs 'social and emotional development' as individual measures of social competence and emotional maturity (and rated negatively) rather than relational concepts of peer interaction and sociability or indeed social rights¹⁸⁸ (in positive terms). In addition, to complement the ECDA, the federal government authorised an extension of the NLSCY project, called Understanding the Early Years (UEY). Initially developed in 12 pilots¹⁸⁹ and following neuroscientific rationale, UEY sought to capture the effect of familial structures (such as background, education levels and income), practices (family functioning, parenting style and mental health) and community characteristics (social capital, supports and recreational and educational resources) upon children's developmental outcomes (Willms, 2005: 1.). With the focus on familial

¹⁸⁶ The full indicators were health birthweight; incidence of meningococcal Group C disease; incidence of measles; incidence of haemophilus Influenzae; infant mortality rate; motor and social development; emotional problem-anxiety; hyperactivity-inattention; physical aggression-conduct problem; prosocial behaviour; language development.

¹⁸⁷ This framework was derived in part from the Early Development Instrument framework, developed by child psychiatrists Dan Offord and Magdalena Janus at McMaster University. The EDI is a population based measure based on the five developmental domains drawn from a rating system used by kindergarten teachers after children have been in school for several months. It provides an aggregate picture of kindergarten-readiness in particular population sets; schools, neighbourhoods and provinces (Cleveland et al., 2006.).

¹⁸⁸ In this way also the developmental model is constructed through particularly middle class values which seek to promote social engagement and responsibility.

¹⁸⁹ Of which York region was one of the first.

characteristics, the UY research continued to direct discursive and policy attention towards parental practices and community supports, with external, non-parental EYEC conspicuously absent as a potential contributing factor to children's development.

At the Provincial level, the influence of the neuroscientific frame in recasting EYEC policy and directing policy interventions is most marked, despite the context of austerity and during (somewhat paradoxically) processes of broader retrenchment of childcare and kindergarten. Indeed, a year prior to the federal ECDA, the Harris government established a Children's Secretariat led by a new Minister for Children, Margaret Marland. In September 1999 the Secretariat funded demonstration projects in five communities¹⁹⁰ under community led panels which were tasked with developing small (non capital) early development initiatives (through existing agencies) based on recommendations from the *Early Years* study (Ontario, 1999: 6.). As one appointed community 'early years champion' in York region noted, from the outset, the early development pilot project's strict early development and health focus did not sit well with existing municipal childcare services and programmes and in the initial stages it appeared that there would be some overlap with existing targeted Resource Centre programmes¹⁹¹ (Wagel, 2006). Concerns that an overt focus on early development would lead to services *exclusive* of childcare and kindergarten services (and the implication of possible continued retrenchment), led the City of Toronto in partnership with the Atkinson Charitable Foundation and Toronto District School Board to begin development of an experimental 'First

¹⁹⁰ South East Grey, London, North Bay, York Region and Ottawa

¹⁹¹ Indeed the first demonstration pilot of an 'early years and parenting centre' in York region utilised existing Family Resource Centre infrastructure to begin delivering services for 18 months before the process was suddenly stopped by the Provincial government who decided to develop and implement their own action plan without local level input (Wagel, 2006).

Duty' pilot initiative in 2000 to explore new policy approaches to bring childcare, kindergarten and family support services into a single accessible programme located in primary schools, co-ordinated with early intervention and family health services ¹⁹²(Corter et al., 2006: 5). It was hoped that Toronto First Duty would provide 'evidence-based story telling' and an alternative model with which to influence the Provincial government (Patterson, 2006.).

An Early Years Task Group was quickly appointed by the Provincial government to table community and municipal recommendations (as general service managers) for a province-wide Early Years Programme and suggested possible frameworks for integrating early development programmes into existing services and hence may have potentially led to the beginnings of an integrated EYEC system (ibid.). However, the process was abruptly halted in spring 2001, when the Province decided to absorb the Children's Secretariat within the Ministry of Community and Social Services and to develop a plan at the Provincial level

¹⁹² Toronto First Duty was a \$5.1 million project funded by the City of Toronto and partners (in great part due to the work of councilor Olivia Chow, Toronto's children's advocate) which established five sites in 2002: Bruce Wood Green Early Learning Centre; Corvette Early Years; Queen Victoria Partners for Early Learning Project; York Early Years Wilcox Project; and Action for Children Today and Tomorrow Secord-Dawes Hub (Corter et al., 2006: 8; Mustard, McCain and Stewart, 2007: 123.). In many ways, this innovative project was the first project in Ontario to integrate EYEC services. As integration was a new concept the process developed over time and sought to iron out the considerable differences in regulatory differences between childcare and kindergarten and the vast differences in compensation and working conditions between different EYEC workers (Corter et al., 2006: 14.). The demonstration project was also subject to a rigorous evaluation programme to measure quality using the Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale Revised (ECERS-R), qualitative interviews with parents, children and EYEC workers, and used the EDI instrument to assess child development in communities with TFD sites. Also in 2003 and 2004 a sample of 76 children were measured using the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test and Test of Early Reading ability (TERA), Number Sense and Social Understanding (ibid.). Vocabulary scores, total TERA and number knowledge were significantly higher after a year in the TFD project.

instead (McCain and Mustard, 2002: 29). The outcome of Provincial process was the Ontario Early Years Plan (OEYP), launched in May 2001, which outlined how Ontario would spend its \$114 million share of the ECDA funding (Ontario, 2003: 1.).

In what would create significant administrative difficulties for municipal managers¹⁹³, OEYP did not seek to engage municipalities or incorporate existing service structures. Instead, the OEYP layered on top of existing programmes, various early child development and health initiatives, led by the neuroscientific rationale of *The Early Years* and reporting commitments to the ECDA¹⁹⁴. In this way, nearly half of the \$114,000 million (\$52,484,500¹⁹⁵) was devoted to maternal and infant health projects, which included a mixture of targeted programmes, such as Community Health Centres and services directed towards children with specific health issues such as developmental delays, hearing, mental health, autism; services for pregnant women with addictions, including prevention of foetal alcohol syndrome but also universal programmes such as campaigns for folic acid use in pregnancy and breastfeeding;

¹⁹³ Indeed, owing to the changes to the Day Nurseries Act, which required municipalities to take over the service system manager roles within childcare, fee subsidies and Resource Centres, municipal governments were required to complete their first five year service plan to administer and secure provincial funding for these services (Patterson, 2006).

¹⁹⁴ In this way \$4,635,000 were committed by OEYP to conduct research and evaluation in child outcomes, child health and evaluation of programmes (Coffey and McCain, 2002: 37.).

¹⁹⁵ Services for Children with Autism, \$20,000,000; Infant Development, 3,400,000; Children's Mental Health, 6,900,000; Pregnant Women with Addictions, \$2,500,000; Infant Hearing, \$600,000; Foetal Alcohol Syndrome, \$1,400,000; Prenatal HIV Testing, \$414,000; Aboriginal Nutrition Program, \$1,000,000; Community Health Centres, \$2,700,000; Healthy Babies, Healthy Children, \$3,550,000; Prenatal and Postnatal Nurse Practitioner Services, \$250,000; Provincial Early Childhood Resource Centre, \$500,000; Healthy Pregnancy and Child Development Promotion, \$2,300,000; Support for At-Risk Pregnant Women, \$70,000; Funding for Public Education and Awareness, \$175,000; Prevention of Neural Tube Defects, \$135,000; Breast Feeding, \$150,000, plus \$6,440,000 extra funding for LEAP programmes [provincial childcare and resources for teenage mothers]; Sexual Assault Services and Injury and Family abuse prevention (Ontario, 2003; Coffey and McCain, 2002: 37.).

prenatal and postnatal nurse practitioner services and Healthy Babies Healthy Children initiative to assess children's early development (Ontario, 2003: 14-31.). Whilst such programmes were congruent with the ECDA initiatives and in many ways to be welcomed, municipal managers were concerned that with the bulk of funding was being channelled through Boards of Health, services would operate exclusive of and fragment, broader EYEC services (Toronto, 2003: 63; Patterson, 2006). Such concerns would equally apply to the second plank of OEYP; the development of Ontario Early Years Centres (\$36,500,000¹⁹⁶) and the introduction of a complementary Early Years Challenge Fund (\$15,400,000).

The Ontario Early Years Centres (OEYC) purported to reflect most closely the recommendations of the *Early Years* report. As such, OEYC's were directed at enhancing parenting skills and the early development of children aged zero to six. Following the neuroscientific frame's rationale and to some extent against the prevailing 'neo-liberal' framework of broader social policy, OEYCs were designed as a universal programme as opposed to targeting those 'at risk'. Indeed they were designated as stand alone (and heavily branded) community centres, which would each provide free resources and encourage *all* parents and caregivers to participate, including literacy and interactive learning activities for caregivers and children; specialist 'early child development' parenting programmes, resources (such as toy libraries and early development materials), outreach activities and links to other ECD services (Ontario, 2003: 27; York, 2005: 57.). Such uniformity dovetailed with the broader agenda to measure child development outcomes from the investments and subject

¹⁹⁶ \$30,000,000 for the Early Years Centres and \$6,500,000 for capital projects.

OYECs to stringent programme evaluation¹⁹⁷. Crucially however, the services provided were part time or sessional (during normal working hours and at evenings/weekends) and hence did not constitute a form of custodial care, relying upon a parent or childminder to participate¹⁹⁸. In this way, OEYC's implicitly supported familial, unregulated and informal care systems, but unlike a straight forward strategy of familialisation, the government would shoulder some responsibility for children's development¹⁹⁹.

Funded directly from Provincial funds, OEYC's were another example of provincial layering of discrete aspects of EYEC policy on top of and to the exclusion of existing EYEC services. Indeed, the OEYP stated that 103 OEYC's would be established in each provincial riding by a provincially appointed Community Champion who would run the process without municipal input (42 Centres in phase I, 2002 and the remaining 63 in phase II in 2003) (Toronto, 2002: 8.). In this way, the Province assumed direct responsibility as the service system manager for OEYC's and subverted the local level planning process which aimed to distribute services on a

¹⁹⁷ The OEYP committed \$2 million for Program Effectiveness Measurement and \$500,000 to fund McMaster University to implement the EDI on children in Ontario (Ontario, 2003: 32.).

¹⁹⁸ As an example the Brant OEYC centre operated drop in sessions during 9 and 5pm weekdays alongside some evening sessions, including one hour 'baby and me' sessions, scheduled appointments for speech and language screenings, parenting workshops, communication strategies for infants and toddlers, first aid, handwriting for pre kindergarten, child development in the first two years, infant sign language, baby massage classes, preparation for kindergarten sessions, learning ABCs and reading sessions with an early literacy specialist, baby yoga, kids kitchen workshop (Brant OEYC, 2006).

¹⁹⁹ And in this way was congruent with Harris's existing plan to privatise and support unregulated care. In some ways the policies supported also the idea of a nuclear family with one parenting providing the bulk of care, as Vosko (2006: 148) argues the policy sat within a conservative framework of familialisation but rather than a strict 'maternal care frame' which considers familial care to be sufficient for child development and wellbeing, the neuroscientific discourse rationalised enhancing or developing all parental styles.

per capital basis²⁰⁰ and (following the welfare orientated framework) direct money to deprived areas as first priority (Patterson, 2006). In addition, the OEYCs had an impact on the Family Resource Centres which in some ways overlapped policy and services in certain areas and also conflicted with the OEYP to implement a standardised, universal and outcomes driven approach to early child development²⁰¹. Hence some were absorbed and became OEYCs²⁰² or faced a funding crisis when the provincial government determined that its 80% share of funding would be redirected to OEYCs. This precipitated the York region government to terminate five of the six resource centres effective 30th April, 2002 (York, 2005: 56.). Remaining Resource Centres had to demonstrate unique services for specific local need to retain funding (Wagel, 2006).

The Ontario Early Years Plan did not direct any funding towards regulated (centre-based) childcare, nor saving a portion of funding to reduce class sizes in junior and senior kindergarten, did not reverse the general retrenchment of early education in junior kindergarten²⁰³. Indeed total provincial ECDA dollars contributed only marginally towards

²⁰⁰ As the Toronto report into the impact of the OEYP noted in provincial ridings with larger populations, OYEC centre funding per child was almost a fifth less than in ridings with smaller populations (Toronto, 2005: 4.).

²⁰¹ As Brenda Patterson (2006), Manager of childcare services in Toronto noted Family Resource Centres being community orientated and highly specific were not particularly accountable to public funds, or quantify how their services operated effectively (ie in terms of numbers served or generate outcomes) whereas OEYCs were more rigorous and hence better at reporting service levels and child outcomes.

²⁰² For instance in Toronto, 22 provincial ridings obtained OEYCs. Prior to their opening, there were 34 cost-shared agencies providing family resource programmes. By the end of the OEYC planning process 11 had become OEYCs. Of the remaining 23 agencies, 5 contracts with the City were terminated (Toronto, 2005: 12.).

²⁰³ Indeed the 2000 budget committed \$101 million annually to reduce average class sizes in Junior Kindergarten to Grade 3, but did not specify how much would be spent by age group (Ontario, 2000: 12.). Maximum average class sizes for Junior Kindergarten, Kindergarten, and Grades 1 through 3 would be reduced to 24 students

the costs of delivering services in the four areas (with the first years money representing a similar amount to the 1995 CAP funding for childcare), hence in the absence of stringent conditions under SUFA to invest block funds in all four areas of the ECDA and with the neuroscientific discourse prioritising an exclusive policy focus on early *child* development, the total childcare budget was further reduced from \$493m in 1998 to \$470m in 2001 (Vosko, 2006: 151.). As many provincial childcare advocates put it Ontario would spend ABC ‘anything but childcare’ ²⁰⁴(Coffey and McCain, 2002: 20.). Indeed, the Early Years Challenge Fund which complemented OEYCs in providing extra funding for local ECD initiatives (specifically aimed at charities and not-for-profit organisations) was explicit in excluding funding for any form of childcare (Ontario, 2000a: 8.). In this way, whilst the Toronto First Duty project contained a clear element of early child development, none of the projects were approved for funding (Toronto, 2005: 4.).

It was clear that the Harris government’s approach, somewhat paradoxically, but entirely congruent with the discursive imperatives of the neuroscientific frame, further embedded the historical fragmentation of EYEC policy and in so doing, reinforcing an artificial divide between care, early development and education. The sum total of the Harris government’s reforms had attempted to reshape and redirect care aspects of EYEC to parental/informal/unregulated sectors whilst simultaneously seeking to augment these forms

(Ontario, 2000b: 2). However, there was concern that the funding would not be enough to cover the hiring of new teachers, which would put pressure on the Grades further up the Grades.

²⁰⁴ Indeed a leaked internal provincial policy paper from the Toronto Star outlined, the Harris government had considered cutting the \$470 million childcare budget down by \$200 million and even eliminating the entire childcare budget (including family resource programmes) and turning the funds into cash payments for low income working parents. However, with the press exposure, neither of these options made their way into the 2002 Ontario budget (CRRU, 2001; Friendly, 2006).

of care through discrete enrichment in the earliest years. However, by explicitly neglecting custodial aspects of care, the existing childcare system and in this way an integrated framework, the OEYP and EYEC framework did not exhibit a truly universal (or child-centred policy) framework in the sense that it would cater for children irrespective of parental employment status and care choices. Indeed these reforms potentially polarised opportunities between those children in increasingly under funded, but regulated centre-based childcare and those in informal/parental care but who had access to developmental opportunities in OEYCs.

5.4 Implementation gaps and the neglect of early education and childcare: The Multilateral Framework on Early Learning and Childcare

To some extent, the ECDA agreement highlighted the potential pitfalls of employing an evidence-based policy strategy without adequate consideration of the political and policy realities in which the implementation of the ECDA took place. As the case of Ontario had demonstrated, the overt focus on early development had precipitated a significant neglect of other aspects of EYEC policy and if left unchecked may have potentially led to the dismantlement of the regulated parts of the system. Whilst the federal government had sought to establish a new tier of early development policies in the provinces, it was not expected that such developments would be to the detriment of other existing aspects of EYEC policy. Indeed, alongside concerns from municipal levels, criticism was voiced from within the Liberal caucus social policy committee that there had been a particular neglect of childcare in most provinces (Mahon, 2004: 8.). As Mustard, McCain and Shanker more sympathetically noted, the ECDA did not offer sufficient funds to encourage investment in ‘big ticket’ items such as the childcare programmes (2007: 111.). In response to these concerns and

suggestions that the overall quality of the EYEC system was suffering, the Federal government entered into renewed negotiations to develop a second Multilateral Framework which would direct funds more clearly towards early learning and childcare (Stewart, 2006). It was clear, however, that the federal government still treated early education and care discretely. Indeed, the negotiated agreement announced in March 2003 committed \$1.05 billion over five years through the CHST in order to complement the ECDA and support provincial governments to fund programmes and services that would ‘provide direct care and early learning for children’ in settings such as ‘childcare centres, family child care homes’ or ‘pre-schools and nursery schools’ (Social Development Canada, 2005: 29.). In rationalising renewed investments, whilst early education was clearly identified with child development on the basis that ‘participation in a quality preschool program promotes cognitive development in young children’, this developmental conception of quality was not specifically linked to investments in childcare (Canada, 2003: 116.). Instead childcare investments were to primarily ‘support parents to participate in employment or training’ and hence whilst the agreement specified that some funding should be directed towards regulated care, *quality* was rather weakly defined as ‘programs that meet the quality standards that are established and monitored by provincial governments’ and augmenting licensing standards²⁰⁵ and hence could support both the regulated commercial market and home care as well as non-profit centre-based care (Cool, 2003: Canada, 2003: 67.). As Vosko notes however, the agreement extended minimal funding to provinces, even relative to the ECDA (2006: 164.). In this way, without extensive funding and the continuing treatment of EYEC policy as discrete entities,

²⁰⁵ Such as child/caregiver ratios, physical environments, health and safety and training and supports (Canada, 2003: 116.).

the prospect of the Multilateral Framework supporting the development of a comprehensive and integration of EYEC at the provincial level was rather limited.

Indeed, at the provincial level, following the election of the provincial Liberal Party under Premier Dalton McGuinty in October 2003, the first \$9.7 million payment under the Multilateral Framework went towards ‘stopping the bleeding’ in the childcare system that had been caused by chronic under funding since 1995 and as such was directed towards health and safety needs related to licensing standards (Patterson, 2006.). As such, the limited funding was approved for essential repairs, furnishings and replacing equipment and did not extend to expanding places or strengthening wage grants (Ontario, 2004: 13.). In addition to shoring up the childcare system, picking up on the federal commitment to invest more in early education and in many ways to reinstate what had once been a policy priority in Ontario, the November 2003 speech from the Throne, committed to implementing an *Excellence for All* education plan to reinvest in early grades (including junior and senior kindergarten)²⁰⁶ and also to develop a ‘Best Start’ Plan for ‘early childhood education’ (Ontario, 2003a: 9.). At the initial stages, Best Start appeared to be driven by an educative frame; the rationale being to ‘ensure our children arrive, on the first day of school prepared to learn’ (Ontario, 2005: 5.). Indeed, alongside commitments to hire specially trained literacy and numeracy experts for junior and senior kindergarten to develop outcomes in ‘reading, writing and math strategies’ and to

²⁰⁶ In part *Excellence for All* was a re-investment strategy which committed a base increase of \$2.6 billion in additional funds for JK to Grade 12 across the McGuinty government’s mandate, which included a rise of \$800 million in 2003-2004 period, rising to \$1.08 billion in 2004-2005 and 1.86 in 2005-2006 (Ontario, 2004: 3.). But the plan also committed for the first time that every elementary school will have a specially trained lead teacher in JK to Grade 6 to literacy and numeracy (Ontario, 2004a: 4-5.).

further reduce class sizes to a cap of 20 by the end of the Liberal mandate²⁰⁷, Best Start proposed reinstating the previous capital programme to establish childcare in new schools and in particular to develop a wrap around programme to complete a full-day of EYEC for four and five year olds with working parents in order to give more access to pre-school (Friendly, 2008: 46.).

In this way, with the existence of multiple agendas directing elements of EYEC policy towards subtle but qualitatively different trajectories of development and in the absence of significant funding to leverage a more comprehensive system, it would perhaps be expected that at the provincial level, the Liberal reform agenda would affect a piecemeal and ad hoc approach with regard to EYEC policy and would not significantly alter the historical fragmentation between early education and care, nor define a clear government social policy role in the lives of young children. Moreover, that ‘early education’ being situated more closely within an outcomes driven agenda and able to generate quantitative ‘cognitive gains’²⁰⁸ would be given priority in policy and investment terms over childcare. However, at this juncture, the intervention of the OECD and the process of engaging in a thematic review would both open up and broaden the EYEC debate and offer a new vision and conceptualisation of EYEC. By injecting a new child-centred policy discourse into the policy stream and by challenging dominant EYEC discourses, the OECD would question conventional views of EYEC and existing policy endeavours and generate renewed attention towards EYEC policy at both federal and provincial levels; precipitating another wave of

²⁰⁷ By 2005, 2,100 had reduced junior kindergarten class sizes from the hiring of 2,400 new teachers (Canada, 2005: 5.)

²⁰⁸ Indeed outcomes from investments in early education through the kindergarten system would most clearly become visible through the ongoing EDI project to map school-readiness in communities.

policy innovations and indeed the possibility of moving EYEC out of the characteristic liberal residual model.

5.5 Critical interventions: The OECD and the influence of a Child-Centred Frame for EYEC at federal and provincial levels

Canada's participation in the second round of the OECD's thematic review of Early Childhood Care and Education, during the latter months of 2003 and through an engagement with the review findings compiled in the OECD Country Note published in October 2004 (although circulated earlier at the Federal level), would offer a unique opportunity to reappraise existing EYEC policy endeavours and would have a significant re-framing effect on both national and provincial policy discourse and its concrete elaboration in EYEC services. As has been discussed, until this time, EYEC policy initiatives had been defined by discrete and unreconciled agendas, which variously directed attention towards early development and education or care. For the most part, the broadly 'scientific' neuroscientific and educative frames had taken precedence over the equal opportunities frame and as such policy endeavours had directed the bulk of investment (moving towards universal coverage) towards achieving narrow 'educative' and developmental goals. In contrast, care had continued to remain the lesser aspect of EYEC policy and access to regulated childcare was limited. Indeed, in 2004, despite a labour force participation rate of 67% there were licensed spaces available for only 15% of children 0-5 years in Ontario (OCBCC, 2006: 4.). Whilst the neuroscientific frame had generated new policy innovations towards the early years, other aspects of EYEC had continued to be developed through the lens of historical policy frameworks, which had very much reinforced a fragmented system and created a patchwork

of different EYEC services. However, the OECD significantly challenged the prevailing view of EYEC, in particular questioning the narrow outcomes driven approach of dominant EYEC frames and previous policy endeavours (OECD, 2004: 79.). Instead the OECD offered a potential route to reconcile discursive tensions and the disparate agendas and reconfigure these through an integrated 'child centred' frame for policy action. Indeed, the OECD's critical engagement Canadian EYEC policy sought to re-examine the idea of what constitutes quality in an EYEC system and to introduce a child-centred idea of holistic pedagogy as the central feature of a high quality system²⁰⁹(OECD, 2006: 3-4.).

The social pedagogic approach, which informs the child-centred frame and is common in Northern European countries yet rare in North America, places children's social rights, care, holistic wellbeing and learning at the heart of a successful child development strategy. This greatly contrasts with what the OECD refers to as the dominant 'pre-primary approach' (and similarly applies to neuroscientific frame) which seeks to impose prescriptive, goal oriented and formal learning strategies upon children (ibid: 61.). Crucially, this brought centre-based, regulated care (as inextricably linked to education and development) to the fore of policy development and particularly through the figure of the pedagogue, the importance of professionally led, developmentally orientated care, with attendant status and remuneration. Placed in this context, whilst Canada had made investments in early development and education, with the neglect of spending and policy commitment towards (centre-based) 'care', it remained a policy laggard and comparatively, the lowest spender by proportion of GDP in

²⁰⁹ As *Starting Strong II*, outlined by way of summary, governments should develop a 'systematic and integrated approach to ECEC policy [which] attends to the social context of early childhood development, places well-being early development and learning at the core of ECEC work, whilst respecting the child's agency and natural learning strategies and achieve quality pedagogical goals (OCED, 2006: 3-4.).

the OECD group²¹⁰. Hence in order in order to leverage a comprehensive child-centred integrated system, which would give all children the opportunity to participate (regardless of parental work choices) much more significant funding would be required and a new approach to EYEC policy.

It is true to say that the OECD's re-framing of EYEC policy diffused throughout and had had particular effects at each level of the Canadian government. It also galvanised childcare advocates who found that, through the child-centred frame, regulated (centre-based) care was finally becoming an integral part of EYEC policy and hence their aims in many ways dovetailed and so got behind the new agenda²¹¹. In particular, the early release of the Country Note to the federal Liberals had provided the impetus and a policy blueprint for the 2004 election platform and subsequently brought EYEC policy once again to the top of the federal agenda, precipitating another round of policy innovations in EYEC, which finally offered the prospect of developing a national EYEC system, centred around a child-centred frame.

The 2004 Speech from the Throne committed the federal government to doing more for early learning and childcare in Canada. Specifically, it committed the government to work collaboratively with the provinces to build the foundations for a shared Early Learning and Child Care (ELCC) initiative with \$5 billion for investment over five years (Canada, 2005). The ELCC initiative made a clear break with previous initiatives by seeking to develop a

²¹⁰ As the OECD reported, Canada was the lowest OECD spender on EYEC services (0-6 year olds) in 2004 spending in the region of 0.3% GDP, whilst the Nordic States spent between 1.5% to 2% of GDP (OECD, 2006: 105.).

²¹¹ Indeed, the OECD's child-centred frame was also some extent taken up by the early child development network, see (Mustard and McCain, 2002: McCain, Mustard and Shanker, 2007.).

national system based on common guiding principles; quality, universality, accessibility and development (QUAD principles) (ibid.). Indeed the intention was to develop EYEC as a ‘pillar of Canada’s social foundations’ and not simply a typically ‘liberal’ marginal policy or directed at specific (discrete) goals (ibid.). As the new Minister for Social Development, Ken Dryden stated ‘it wasn’t just \$5 billion over five years, it was to create a national system; something that wouldn’t come and go in five years and to move childcare ahead in such a way that it is there forever’ (Dryden, 2006). This ambitious vision was politically contentious however. During the negotiation process to develop a multilateral agreement, a sticking point was the requirement to report on measurable outcomes related to QUAD principles and whether only non-profit/state funded systems would be supported (Cool, 2007: 6.). As such, the federal government moved to create bilateral agreements in principle with those provinces who would commit to developing EYEC through QUAD; providing a \$700 million trust (\$271.9 million for Ontario) in the interim to be accessed by provinces by 31 March 2006. Ontario, in the midst of developing its Best Start vision, was one of these.

The Agreement in Principle between the Government of Canada and Ontario, negotiated during the early part of 2005 and signed in May 2005, elaborates the beginnings of an integrated and child-centred EYEC vision. Through the QUAD guiding principles, Ontario commits to investing in:

“developmental early learning and child care [that] is child centred, reflects family and community contexts and encourages meaningful partnerships between parents and child care providers” (Canada and Ontario, 2005: 3.).

In this way, Ontario states that it will invest in ‘high quality early learning and child care supports’ including ‘an appropriate complement of staff and child care providers qualified in early learning and child care’, make early learning and childcare ‘affordable to all parents who choose to use it’ and to be sensitive to ‘children with various cultural and linguistic circumstances’ (ibid.). In addition, in order to guide the process of making improvements in the ‘*quality and developmental component* of early learning and child care programs’ the agreement states that Ontario would establish a College of Early Childhood Educators to develop and monitor professional standards and to be guided by two expert panels; an Expert Panel on Early Learning and an Expert Panel on Quality and Human Resources (ibid: 5.).

The two expert panels, headed by Professors Jane Betrand and Donna S Lero respectively, comprised a much broader panel of EYEC experts and also provided formally marginalised Canadian advocates (including those with transatlantic links to an alternative ‘child-centred’ EYEC network) and municipal policy development officers²¹² a route into the provincial policy stream. Indeed going much further than *The Early Years*, the expert panels conducted an extensive review of both EYEC evidence and cross national research, including different pedagogical approaches, broad holistic notions of development, practices for seamless integration across different EYEC services and equitable compensation for EYEC workers²¹³ (BSEPEL, 2006; BSEPEL, 2007; BSEPQHR, 2007). Central to the Best Start Expert

²¹² In particular Julie Mathien, Policy Development Officer within the Social Development, Finance and Administration in Toronto developed links with the OECD’s thematic review team, to conduct cross-national research and develop the municipal position (including the Toronto First Duty Project) on EYEC (Bennett, 2005). It also brought the Toronto First Duty project to centre stage.

²¹³ The Best Start Expert Panel on Quality and Human Resources recommended significant increases in investment and a comprehensive streamlined funding model for regulated early learning and care services that recognised the costs of providing high quality programmes and a longer term vision to increase accessibility by

Panels' work was to 'ensure that Ontario's Best Start reflects the principles of diversity, equity and inclusion for all children and families' (BSEPEL, 2007: 159.). Moreover by acknowledging that 'care and learning are inseparable concepts....early childhood settings [should] provide both care and education, a caring nurturing environment that supports learning and early development' (BSEPEL, 2007: 4.). Indeed questioning the growing tendency towards a formal approach in early education settings and a downward slide of prescriptive 'cognitive goals' within EYEC settings (including, in particular, OEYCs), the Early Learning Expert Panel suggest instead that these should be informed by 'pedagogy rather than a specific curriculum' and 'situate children within the context of a developmental continuum that extends from birth to age eight, rather than evaluate their performance against age related expectations' (BSEPEL, 2007: 4.). Indeed congruent with a child-centred frame's conception of a 'children's space' the Expert Panel state that 'learning is fundamentally social and takes place within children's cultural contexts... children learn through active engagement, activity, experimentation, play and social interactions with others' hence the guiding principle for EYEC settings should to promote children's well-being; 'to value children's play [and] create a climate of delight that honours childhood' (ibid: 14-15.).

The influence of these critical interventions had a marked influence on Ontario's EYEC policy, both discursively and within concrete policy implementation. Indeed under the recently created Ministry of Children and Youth Services (MCYS), which had taken over

ensuring that parents pay no more than 20 to 25% of the cost of EYEC programmes (on the recommendation of the OECD) (BSEPQHR, 2007: 38.). It also recommended by 2009 all early childhood assistants would be enrolled in an accredited ECE, ECA programme, by 2010 all directors and supervisors of centre-based EYEC programmes have a degree in early childhood education and all pedagogical leaders/assistant supervisors of resource centres/OYECs and childcare centres have a degree and that all teachers in kindergarten are enrolled in an appropriate ECD course (BSPHR, 2007: 42.).

responsibility for programmes for children (although the Ministry of Education continued to be responsible for kindergarten), the provincial Best Start Plan was augmented to include the development of ‘Best Start Hubs’ which would be more consistent with QUAD principles and in this way, elaborated a child-centred frame for policy action (Ontario, 2005a: 1.). The Best Start hubs initiative entailed a long term plan to ‘create a comprehensive system of services that supports children, including Francophone, Aboriginal and children with linguistic, cultural and special needs from birth to the transition to school’ (Ontario, 2005a: 2.). As the MCYS addendum guide to implementing Best Start hubs described, the focus should be on developing ‘a system rather than services [that] positions child development within a broader context, recognizing that child development must be viewed as inseparable from the child’s social context’ (Ontario, 2006: 6.). In this way, key to implementing this initiative (and in marked contrast to the previous OEYP and OEYCs), the Best Start hub programme, along with all other Best Start initiatives would be developed through 47 partnerships between MCYS, the Ministry of Education, municipalities and local community members, allowing local co-ordination and giving a local flavour and community ethos to each hub (Ontario, 2006a: 2). The hubs would plan to offer a single integrated, seamless point of access to services and supports based on local needs and available resources (Ontario, 2005b: 3.). The central elements would include:

“high quality learning and care environments, an early years staff team that would include teachers, early childhood educators; educational assistants and family support staff who would work together toward common goals; inclusive access meeting the needs of children and families; and parent participation, through direct involvement in programs, planning and decision making” (Toronto, 2006: 9.).

The core services, which would be located in schools (as first preference), upon new sites or developed in non-profit childcare centres, would each include 'licensed developmental childcare for children from birth to four years; an integrated licensed childcare/kindergarten program with option to attend half day, a full day or an extended day for four and five year olds; links to public health and early development programs; parenting resources and a wide range of high quality, developmentally and culturally appropriate before and after school programs, including sports, art, music and library services' (ibid: 10.). In summary, and greatly reflective of the child-centred frame, the York Childcare Services Plan state that hubs would 'support a holistic approach to child development through an integrated approach to service delivery' and as Toronto's Vision for Best Start succinctly encapsulates; 'basic to a good society is that children are welcome, are given a good environment during childhood and are the concern of the whole society' (York, 2005: 70; Toronto, 2006: i.). In this way, Best Start articulated a clear social policy role for the government in shaping the lives and life chances of children, breaking down the notion that parents have the sole responsibility for children and instead placing children's care and wellbeing at the heart of the community.

The augmented Best Start Strategy was heavily reliant upon the federal ELCC investment. Indeed, to ease the pressure on municipal budgets, the province determined that the federal funds would be provided at 100% (as opposed to 80/20 cost sharing) and would proceed in two main phases. Between 2005 and 2008 in phase I, funding (including the \$271 trust to be accessed by March 2006 and subsequent £1.9 billion per year) would create 12,500 spaces by

2005/6 leading to 25,000 new EYEC spaces²¹⁴ across Ontario by 2007/08 through both renovation and new construction (Ontario, 2005a: 4; Ontario, 2005c: 6.). Priority in developing spaces would go to integrated EYEC places for children in junior and senior kindergarten (which would follow the school year) and a gradual expansion of licensed EYEC places and subsidies for children 0-4 years (York, 2006: 5.). Three pilot communities for ‘Hubs’²¹⁵ would implement the full Best Start Hub vision at an accelerated pace, creating 53 Hubs and 3,500 new EYEC places by 2008 (Ontario, 2005a: 5.). Other communities would develop transition plans by January 2006 to develop a smaller number of pilot hub models (York, 2006: 33). In phase II (2006/8- 2011) all regions would implement the full hub model, create wholly free, universal, full time integrated EYEC places for junior and senior kindergarten and free part time EYEC places for children aged 2 and a half to four years old (2-1/2 hours per day) with subsidised wrap-around care (Colley, 2006: 99.). To make these EYEC places more accessible (including the 0 -2 age group), the old needs system of determining eligibility would be altered to a more straight forward income test which would give families of net income below \$20,000 receiving full subsidy for childcare costs, increasing thereafter on a sliding scale with families with a net income of \$40,000 receiving subsidies to reduce costs to \$8 per day, with those on \$70,000 and above paying full costs (at an average \$43 per day) (Ontario, 2007).

The Best Start Plan through the ELCC initiative was welcomed amongst childcare advocates, municipal managers and early development experts alike (OCBCC, 2006a; Friendly, 2006;

²¹⁴ As of the 31st March 2004, Ontario had an estimated 124,442 licensed spaces for children aged 0 to 4 (Ontario, 2005b: 5.).

²¹⁵ In rural areas of Lambton and Chatham-Kent, the District of Timiskaming and Hamilton’s East End (Ontario, 2005a: 4.).

Wagle, 2006). Indeed as both municipal managers for York and Toronto noted, Best Start would have given them a lot more money, representing about a third of the budget and some 25% increase in spaces (Patterson, 2006; Wagle, 2006). But for Brenda Patterson it was more than just an expansion, indeed Best Start finally gave recognition to the latent municipal conception that childcare was an important service for children, benefiting them and developing their potential and not just a ‘welfare’ custodial service for working women (despite historical structures of financing directing it this way)²¹⁶(2006). Whilst there was a concern that proposed expansion did still not take account of the inflationary costs of childcare and hence may have led to future funding deficits in supporting the expanded system, the two commitments represented a clear change in strategic direction for EYEC policy and may have embedded the principles of this new integrated system upon which future investment could be directed (Wagle, 2006). Indeed, for possibly the first time, each level of the government appeared to be bound by a common direction for EYEC policy and this presented a moment of opportunity to effectively switch the tracks of Ontario’s previous fragmented system, in which the government’s reconciliation of care was marginal and ‘welfare orientated’, towards a universal and inclusive system. Indeed, with ongoing strategic direction provided by the two Expert Panels, it offered the prospect of developing and embedding a child-centred frame, which would put children’s experiences and wellbeing *in the here and now* (as opposed to instrumental future ‘investments’) at the heart of policy initiatives. Unfortunately, at this point, the election of the Federal Reformed Conservative

²¹⁶ Indeed despite federal and provincial structures of financing which directed subsidies to the lowest paid, in municipalities, especially within Toronto, there had always remained a latent idea of ‘quality and developmental’ childcare; as Brenda Patterson stated ‘if all we were concerned about was parents who just need to work, then we would have just given them money and said just find a baby-sitter; but we believe that childcare actually improves community outcomes’ (2006.).

Party would dramatically hamper the provincial Best Start plan and cut short the prospects for the full Best Start vision to be implemented.

5.6 The End of a National EYEC Plan: the Federal Reformed Conservatives, the re-turn of the Maternal Care Frame and a Universal Child Care Benefit

The election of the Federal, 'Reformed Conservative' Party in January 2006 and the immediate announcement that the government would give one year's notice that it would be cancelling the bilateral agreements with participating provinces, precipitated what can only be described as a devastating blow to Ontario's emerging EYEC policy strategy and indeed cut short any prospects of developing a national system of EYEC across Canada. Instead the federal government stated that it would provide a new 'Universal Child Care Benefit' of (taxable) \$100 per month for each child under six, starting in 2006, at a cost of \$2.4 billion (Cool, 2007: 7; Canada, 2007: 1). Framed as providing 'choice in childcare', although clearly not intended to recognise the *actual* costs of childcare or to support systems and infrastructure, the payment is better conceived as a (token) 'maternal care supplement' and in many ways reflected the influence of the social right caucus and anti-feminist group, REAL women in the 'reformed' Conservative Party, whose stated aims had been to give 'women greater opportunity to stay at home with their children' (Pierson, 1995: 27.). As Indeed as the federal minister for Human Resources and Social Development stated 'we think that parents know what is best for their families based on their own circumstances' (Canada, 2007). The policy in this way represented the surprising resurgence of the maternal care frame, although as a HRDC bureaucrat noted it represented a backlash, on the part of the social right, against the neuroscientific frame 'which in some quarters is read as parents aren't good enough' and

the federal move towards implementing universal (centre-based) EYEC ‘which in spite of all this research, intuitively some people think that children would be better off at home with their parents’ and hence reflected the outcome of an inter-Conservative debate over the place and value of parents in children’s care and development (Westlake, 2006).

At the provincial level the government was faced with a significant loss of funds (some \$1.4 billion), the federal government having determined that a one-time final payment of \$254 million in respect of 2006/07 would be made to Ontario (Ontario, 2006: 5.). Ontario was caught in a dilemma. Having already created a projected 14,000 spaces by September 2006 in the first phase of Best Start, the province determined that the final payment would be used over four years to secure and sustain these places (through fee subsidies, wage improvement and administration) and to continue the pilot hub project in demonstration communities (ibid: 37.). This left other municipal governments in a difficult position regarding the implementation of their own pilot hub models. Indeed the province required that each municipality write Best Start Addendum plans for 2005-2008. The York Region Plan states ‘there is no provincial funding approval for program funding for hubs’ (York, 2006a: 7.). In short, municipalities were expected to continue processes of integration, but without any money (Wagle, 2006).

In this context, it would be apparent that Ontario would have to make choices as to which elements of Best Start would continue (with Provincial funding only²¹⁷) and which elements would be sidelined. In many ways, Best Start reverted to the ad hoc and piecemeal approach

²¹⁷ And also following the failure of the federal government’s ‘child-care spaces initiative’ which was intended to provide \$250 million across Canada for private employers to develop childcare space, the federal government determined that the annual \$250 would go direct to the provinces to create spaces (Sentate, 2009: 71.).

that had previously characterised Ontario's EYEC initiatives. Indeed, expansion in EYEC places has slowed, with the province allocating funding in 2007 for 7,000 new spaces through \$105.7 million additional provincial dollars and a small wage increase of approximately 3% for Ontario's 33,500 EYEC workers with \$24.8 million funding (Ontario, 2007a). With the changes in subsidy rules, which gave greater potential access but were not being realised due to slower growth, Ontario announced in July 2008 to fund an extra 3,000 spaces with additional \$25 million investment (Senate, 2009: 161.). However, as the Childcare Resource and Research Unit estimates, in 2008 there are only spaces in centre-based EYEC for 19.6% of children aged 0-5 and it is likely that the waiting lists for places run into the tens of thousands (Beach et al., 2009: 202.).

The commitment to establish the College of Early Childhood Educators went ahead in 2007 with \$12 million funding and by February 2009 became fully operational to 'establish high standards for the profession and recognition to the role of early childhood educators have in the lives of Ontario's children' (Ontario, 2009: 7). \$2 million was earmarked for improved access to training for supervisors and directors (Senate, 2009: 163.).

Whilst Ontario has continued to develop elements of quality in EYEC, the issue of integration and the Phase II commitments have been more piecemeal and will hamper the purported 'child-centred' intentions of Best Start. Indeed it is apparent that policy discourse and actual policy implementation has begun to diverge in the light of funding issues. In perhaps a pragmatic move (owing to most of the infrastructure already being in place), Ontario focused on developing junior and senior kindergarten age groups, appointing an early learning advisor in 2007, Dr Charles Pascal, to table recommendations to develop integrated, full day (and year

round) EYEC (utilising a play-based pedagogical approach) for junior and senior kindergarten which will start in 2010 and roll out across the province by 2013 (Ontario, 2009: 7; Beach et al., 2009: 80.). Whilst the MCYS results-based plan briefing document states that it ‘will continue to support the 24 Best Start Networks developing neighbourhood hubs’ there is no mention of (capital) funding allocations for infrastructure (ibid.). Such policy absence for children under 4 somewhat conflicts with the MCYS’s first strategic framework launched in 2008, which states its core principles for services are ‘child and family-centred, community driven and situated; integrated and collaborative; developmentally appropriate and socially inclusive’ (Senate, 2009: 160.). Indeed this child-centred framework, for all its commendable discursive commitments and ambitions, will not be fully elaborated in policy and services without additional funding a renewed commitment to the hub project and a change of policy direction at the federal level.

At the federal level, efforts have been launched by the Standing Senate Committee on Social Affairs, Science and Technology, releasing a report in April 2009 entitled *Early Childhood Education and Care: Next Steps* to convince the Federal government to reconsider a multilateral framework for EYEC, based on the release of the OECD’s report, *Starting Strong II*, which rated Canada last (in spending terms) amongst 14 other countries in the second round of the review (Senate, 2009). Canada currently spends just 0.25% of GDP on EYEC, less than the United States. If Canada were to spend 1% GDP that would be equal to \$10 billion, to realise a Nordic 2% of GDP level of investment some \$20 billion would be required. There has not as yet, been a response from the government and it seems Canada, for all the recent good intentions, in order to move forward on EYEC, as the OECD states ‘significant energies and funding will need to be invested in the field to create a universal

system in tune with the needs of a full employment economy, with gender equity and with new understandings of how young children develop and learn' (Senate, 2009: 1.).

Conclusion

In conclusion, this chapter and the one before have demonstrated that the Canadian EYEC policy trajectory remains in flux, with no sign of a stable EYEC policy consensus in Canada. The role of the state in the early years of children's lives, in terms of their care, early development and early education – even whether this role should fall to parents (and private choices) – continues to be hotly debated. It is this discursive instability and the continuing interplay of different EYEC frames, both over time and particularly now between different administrative levels of government which has, as yet, precluded the development of both a comprehensive and coherent policy framework for EYEC. This has implications for a number of potential interpretations and explanations of EYEC policy development.

Firstly, it is difficult to argue as Dolbrowolsky and Saint-Martin (2002), Jenson (2004) have previously, that recent policy developments in Canada represent a clear paradigm shift from a 'family responsibility paradigm' to an 'investing in children paradigm'. The same applies to the Jenson and Saint-Martin (2006) argument that the Canadian case converges on a 'LEGO paradigm' with a clear state role in early childhood which rationalises particular social investments to develop the human capital of the nation and to activate female labour market participation. The notion of a singular overarching 'paradigm' stresses a greater level of ideational and strategic coherence than has defined the Canadian EYEC policy trajectory, especially recently. As Hall states, 'only in some cases will it be appropriate to speak of a

fully elaborated policy paradigm. In others, the web of ideas affecting the direction of policy will be looser and subject to more frequent variation' (1993: 291.).

Secondly, as this chapter has demonstrated, feminist childcare advocacy emerged earlier and achieved more significant influence in Ontario/Canada compared to England, reflecting perhaps the historic weakness of the maternal care frame in Ontario and earlier growth of maternal/female labour market participation. However this did not precipitate the institutionalisation of an EYEC system in Ontario/Canada which has appeared to have suffered as much as England from the mismatch between social risks and policy provision. Moreover, we have seen that at the Federal level a paradoxical re-emergence of the latent maternal care frame at a comparatively late stage. Such findings reduce the efficacy of explanations of change which focus primarily on social structural change and instead amplifies the role of ideas, discursive mediation and agential innovation.

Owing to these complexities, I have not sought to ascertain whether recent social policy developments have forged a new paradigm of welfare state practice. Instead I have taken the more modest and nuanced task of documenting how particular EYEC frames have arisen in political and policy circles, through the efforts of various networks of advocates, academics and other expert actors and organisations (at the domestic and international level) who have sought to exploit institutional spaces and moments of openness to bring EYEC to the top of the political agenda, with varying success. In this way, the focus of this chapter has been upon the creative aspects of political life, the dynamics of policy innovation and the qualitative texture of services that have been concretised in policy (Bradford, 1998: 2.).

I have shown that EYEC policy in Canada/Ontario bears the legacy of historical fragmentation, with kindergarten embedded into the principles of the welfare state and defining a role for the state in early education, but had remained neutral over maternal participation in the labour market, leaving decisions about care, development and wellbeing of children as a largely private matter and embedded childcare as a marginal 'welfare' policy (with the state reconciling care only for those at risk of poverty). It was both this official neutrality (in the absence of a strong embedding of maternal ideas of attachment) and federal support for feminist advocacy which aided the ascendancy of the equal opportunities frame, directing attention towards reconciling maternal care roles. Whilst the equality of opportunities frame was clear on the gender dimension of EYEC policy, it was less clear upon and lacked a supporting evidential basis for the developmental and educative benefits of childcare and hence had difficulty articulating the need for 'high quality non-profit care' as opposed to simply custodial care, which contributed to the failure of the first national childcare plan. Hence as neo-liberal and austerity policies reinforced a minimal state role in EYEC and in so doing, private and informal forms of care it looked likely that EYEC would remain a marginal policy, where state interventions were left for those at risk. As this chapter has described, state interventions directed marginal efforts to combat poverty for low income families (through the NCB) and highly targeted Aboriginal Head Start programmes. But these policies appeared to further entrench a liberal, residual policy framework and alongside parallel new public management reforms which closed down spaces for feminist advocacy and broader debates about gender equity.

Hence the appearance of significant federal investments in EYEC during the early 2000s was unexpected and puzzling. This chapter has analysed how EYEC returned to the top of the

federal and provincial agendas, through a detailed analysis of the institutional changes and responses wrought by new public management that presented opportunities and not simply constraints for social policy innovation. These new institutional practices initially favoured particular forms of evidence and expertise, opening the policy process to early development experts and the ascendance of 'scientific' neuroscientific and educative frames. These EYEC frames forced a re-appraisal of both the significance of childhood as a phase of life for future outcomes and the implications of a welfare state framework which leaves children's development and early education as a private matter (although were silent on matters of gender equity). As this chapter has shown this precipitated rapid social policy innovation and expansion in EYEC policy. This period of innovation has been marked by significant phase of policy experimentation through particular EYEC frames and this relative openness has offered opportunities for domestic and international actors to critically intervene, injecting new EYEC frames which have sought to deepen the notion of a 'child-centred' early years policy and an expansive (state) role in children's care and wellbeing. However, it has also precipitated a discursive instability and fluidity which has frustrated efforts in Ontario and precluded the full embedding of an extensive EYEC system. Whilst there may be a general consensus on the importance of the early period of children's lives, whether the state should provide this directly or invest in parents is, as yet, unreconciled in Canada.

6. CHAPTER SIX: EYEC FRAMES IN THE INTERNATIONAL CONTEXT: INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATIONS, NETWORKING AGENTS AND CHANNELS OF COMMUNICATION

Policy analysts have become increasingly interested in the possibilities for ideational circulation between and above national borders and the hypothesised mechanisms (both agential and structural) which facilitate (and mitigate) these processes. Much of this work has focused upon; the spread of economic ideas (Blyth, 2002; Somers and Block, 2005); the spread of neo-liberal workfare policies (King, 1999; Cebulla and Greenberg, 2004); a general trend towards the Americanisation of welfare policy (Deacon, 2000; Prideaux, 2001; Holmwood, 2000); and empirical analyses of direct policy transfers between the US and UK (Daguerre, 2004; Dolowitz, 2003; Rose, 2001; Evans, 2004.). Linked to this literature has emerged work identifying the changing structures, contexts and levels within which political action takes place. Many authors point to the increasing importance of supranationally and globally based organisations or institutions (Deacon, Hulse and Stephens, 1997: 2; Ferrera et al, 2000); changing the traditional patterns of government to governance (Sabel and Zeitlin, 2003; Hajar and Wagenaar, 2003); and even leading to the purported transnationalisation of policy (Stone, 2004: 559; Keck and Sikkink, 1999.).

Broadly speaking, each of these literatures deals with the possibilities for ideas to circulate beyond national borders, although each is distinctive in the way that ideational mechanisms, institutions, agents and structures are theorised. What these bodies of work do suggest (and seek to demonstrate) is that the policy making arena is becoming increasingly fluid; that channels of policy learning are increasingly multi-scaler and as such includes an important

role for the transnational flows of ideas (Mahon, 2005: 1.). Much of this work writes with a new vocabulary, rooted in an appreciation of the importance of new political practices and the theorisation of an emergent system of governance which is experimental and networked rather than hierarchical (Sabel and Zeitlin, 2003: 19.). Terms such as governance, institutional capacity, networks, complexity, trust, deliberation and independence dominate the debate, while terms such as the state, government, power and authority, sovereignty, participation and interest groups have lost their grip on the analytical imagination (Hajar and Wagenaar, 2003: 82.). It is suggested that such language aids theorists to unlearn embedded intellectual reflexes and break of out tacit patterns of thinking (ibid.). Such an endeavour is important as explaining how some ideas and policies seemingly come to appear in two or more places (at once or successively) - especially where there are no obvious existing policy legacies in place - has often presented a puzzle for many political analysts.

Indeed, much existing research which has explicitly dealt with welfare state development has been conducted within the field of Historical Institutionalism or welfare regime theory (Pierson, 2001; Esping-Anderson, 1990; 1999). Such accounts theorise that national welfare institutions crystallise around a coherent set of regime specific logics and that once embedded exhibit 'sticky' path-dependent trajectories of reform in response to exogenous (material and ideational) influences. In this way, national welfare states (or particular welfare regimes) are presumed closed to transnational influences. Within these theories, the potential for ideational circulation to occur outside national borders and to cause path-breaking policies to appear within different welfare states is severely limited; empirical evidence of such occurrences are often presented as anomalies to the general trajectory of welfare state development. Much of the recent work on ideational circulation, policy transfer and the

bridging of insights from international relations theory with comparative politics, aims to counter the expectation of embedded national trajectories of reform, as such accounts stress structural continuities at the expense of contingencies of change. Moreover many of these accounts tend to exhibit a tendency towards methodological nationalism (Stone, 2004: 546.).

As such, this chapter will briefly examine some of the literature dealing with ideational circulation; including work on policy transfer, discursive institutionalism and international organisations; all of which seeks to explain the increasing complexity of policy making within a broad international context of social interaction. In so doing, I hope to highlight some of the potential pitfalls that some approaches to ideational circulation create through particular theorisations of agential/structural relations and tendencies towards the reification of analytical levels of analysis especially between the national/international levels. I shall also review some alternative work on transnational policy communities which seeks to elucidate how particular agents are able to transcend national boundaries (operating at both national and international levels simultaneously) and who facilitate processes of ideational circulation.

Utilising insights from the latter work on transnational agency I hope to explain the particular activities of early years advocates and experts who have been pivotal in diffusing particular EYEC frames (as outlined above) throughout the international context; operating through and facilitated by international organisations. This chapter will make an in-depth analysis of the OECD as an important international organisation with regard to the development of EYEC policy²¹⁸. Through this discussion I will demonstrate how this organisation has created a

²¹⁸ I have chosen to review how EYEC frames have been diffused and forwarded by the OECD. There are many other international organisations which have become interested in EYEC policies (ie the World Health

favourable (structured) context for ideational circulation that operates beyond the bounds of national domains, yet to also iterate that the OECD does not only operate ‘above’ national contexts, it operates in various spatial settings, allowing for contingent and indirect influences over national policy. Attention will be paid to how different EYEC frames have come to gain ascendancy and subsequently been deployed by this international organisation through an analysis of the intersection of particular EYEC frames with the broader discursive structures and the broader ideological rationale of the OECD and in particular its Education Directorate. Through this discussion I will show how and why this international organisation has sought to develop the case for EYEC policies. In the case of the OECD, traditionally viewed as a ‘neo-liberal stalking horse’, an interest in extending social provision through EYEC policies is quite surprising. However, alongside this, I will show how this particular organisation has facilitated the networking activities of agents beyond the remit of these institutions. Through interviewing key actors involved in early years policies in the UK and Canada I found that significant networking occurred through less perceptible channels of communication. Thus I seek to explain how early years experts work simultaneously at multiple (conventionally understood) levels of analysis, indeed, I hope to show that many of the same actors who have been important at national levels also operate ‘above’ within international organisations and ‘across’ by engaging in independent networking. In this way, I will trace how particularly the ‘child-centred’ EYEC frame has gained ascendancy in multiple contexts simultaneously and over time. I thus seek to elucidate both the structural mechanisms facilitating EYEC frame

Organisation and the World Bank). However I have chosen the OECD as it has had particular effects within Canada and the UK. I have also conducted research on the EU, especially the European Network on Childcare. Due to pressures of space, I have decided not to include this case in the research presented here, largely because the main work of the Network coincided with a period during which the UK government was particularly hostile to EYEC policy. Moreover, of course, EU policy can only have a very indirect influence on Canada. Finally, much of the emphasis of the WHO and World Bank has been upon EYEC for developing countries.

diffusion and the agency behind such diffusions. In so doing, I hope to build a framework of analysis which focuses on the relational causal complexes that are capable of producing potential and actual effects whatever the spatial settings (Patomaki, 2001: 79.). Indeed, much existing work treats international organisations as an autonomous external agency with significant ‘ideological coherence’ seeking to convert pressure or sanction the agency of national governments. Often, in the absence of direct empirical ‘evidence’ of influence over national agenda setting, much work consequently concludes that international organisations have limited causal impact on national policy trajectories. However, the processes of ideational circulation, especially in the field of EYEC policies and ideas is much more complex and rather than this process involving straightforward lines of communication, power and influence between institutions, states and national actors I hope to capture the sense of a mosaic of relationships and interactions where common identity, particular frames are deployed and policy consensus are formed (Stone, 2001: 354.). By tracing largely invisible processes of communication and elucidating the complex and multifaceted nature of international organisations I seek to develop a more nuanced understanding of the complex processes of ideational circulation in the field of EYEC policy.

6.1 Approaches to explaining ideational circulation

Some existing work which seeks to ascertain how policy ideas circulate or transfer between different national contexts has been conducted within the policy transfer literature. Much of this work focuses upon analyses of ideational change through identifying common policy changes at the national level. Often in such analyses a policy idea is shown to be disembedded and transferred (either wholesale or partially) from one context to another. As

Dolowitz states, policy transfer occurs when ‘the policies and practices of one political system are fed into and utilised in the policy making areas of another political system (2003: 101.). It explicitly focuses upon the meso-level of analysis. As Rose notes this process differs from ‘the spread of big ideas such as Keynesianism or in reaction to monetarism, because it focuses on concrete programme instruments necessary to implement these ideas... lesson drawing is about the content of the programmes that are adopted in response’ (2001: 4.). Indeed policy transfers are usually conducted within the fields of health and education policy and more substantively policy examples (transferring from the US to the UK) such as the Child Support Agency and the New Deal welfare-to-work programmes (Daguerre, 2004: 41; Evans, 2004.). Here it is generally governments which are considered to be the agency in the process of policy transfer²¹⁹. Indeed, the key actors driving processes of ‘mutual learning’, ‘lesson drawing’²²⁰ or conducting direct emulations of policy between different national contexts are

²¹⁹ Although not all analyses of policy transfer specify an agent in the process of transfer. Many empirical analyses merely describe the successive adoption of similar policies between two national contexts without specifying the complex processes of ideational transfer that arise through agential action and discursive mediation. This is also a tendency of the diffusion literature (Stone, 2004: 75.). Moreover it negates analysis of how such policy ideas and discourses are mediated by, or resonate within, existing embedded social economic structural complexes (ie historically embedded welfare states). In many ways, these analyses overstate the ability of actors to simply lift one policy idea to the next. Indeed as Dolowitz reasons in reference to the policy transfer of the Child Support Agency between the US, Australia and the UK, many policies which are lifted from one context to the next without proper reference to particular institutional and cultural settings will suffer significant implementation gaps (2003: 106.).

²²⁰ Dolowitz and March (1996: 344) caution that although policy transfer, emulation and lesson drawing all refer to a process in which knowledge about policies, administrative arrangements, institutions in one time or place are used in the development of policies, administrative arrangements and institutions in another time and/or place, there are subtle differences between the terms. Indeed, lesson drawing implies a voluntary process of drawing ideas; whereas policy transfer can involve both voluntary and coercive transfer (ie where a government or supranational institution may push or force another government to adopt a particular policy.). In this section, coercive policy transfers do not apply to ideational circulation of EYEC policies between the UK and Canada and as such for the purposes of this discussion policy transfer applies to non-coercive transfer.

national bureaucrats and politicians (Bennett, 1997: 213). However, much of this work, whilst rich in empirical detail, tends to negate or under-theorises the precise ideational mechanisms and political dynamics which precipitate and facilitate these processes. In many ways much of the policy transfer literature does this self-consciously, being wary of deductive formal models of reasoning. Instead as Evans states policy transfer analysis makes a claim towards creating simply:

“an analogical or heuristic model in the sense that it [captures] substantive similarities between a particular form of policy-making and mechanisms of transfer, diffusion, convergence, emulation or learning” (2004: 25.).

However, as Bennett argues, simple analyses of ‘policy emulation’ or lesson drawing can rarely be definitively established. To conclude that convergence is attributable to emulation often requires some leaps in judgement (Bennett, 1991: 223.). Bennett argues that in order to confirm a hypothesis of emulation of policy (or direct policy transfer) several conditions must be satisfied. Firstly, a clear exemplar (a state that has adopted an innovative stance); secondly evidence of awareness and utilisation of policy evidence from that exemplar; and thirdly a similarity in the goals, content or instruments of public policy (ibid.). Such specific criteria are indeed difficult to fulfil and within the transfer literature differences in policy implementation are occasionally noted but ultimately glossed over²²¹. As such, exacting

²²¹ As in the case of Daguerre’s work on the adoption of workfare policies in the UK following the example of the US, she suggests that policy transfer has occurred between these two countries labour market policies, even though in implementation policy in the UK has been ‘less ideological’ than in the US and there are particular differences in policy structure between TANF (Temporary Assistance to Needy Families) and the New Deal in the UK (see Daguerre, 2004: 46-47.).

evidence of wholesale policy transfers between countries is particularly rare to come across (suggesting perhaps that more contingent and indirect processes of ideational circulation may be behind seeming empirical cases of policy transfers or learning). In many ways, the term policy transfer suggests a rather tight definition of specific policy instruments being ‘lifted’ and ‘replanted’ elsewhere, whilst ‘policy learning’ is conversely too vague a concept to embrace the subtly different ways that evidence from one country might influence the policy making process of another (Bennett, 1997, 225.).

However, in essence, an analysis must do more than simply present empirical detail of similar policy instruments to properly account for such emulation or policy transfer. Even if Bennett’s criteria were satisfied and an account of policy transfer could present good empirical evidence of emulation as outlined by the conditions above, there is still no accounting for the reasons why state actors emulate policies from another context. Indeed, here the reasons for agent behaviour are under-theorised. Policy transfer literature often assumes that agents simply choose to emulate without specifying or exploring the underlying context in which such agents make these choices. As Evans states ‘the emergence of a policy transfer network begins with the recognition by a decision-making elite, politicians or bureaucrats, of the existence of a decision problem’ (2004: 71.). Such deeper considerations directs the analytical gaze towards existing operative structures (both ideational and material) which conditions (but does not entirely determine) actors preferences. Indeed, whilst political actors are reflexive they do not operate in a vacuum; they are located within an established context of social interaction²²². Within the policy transfer literature there is a tendency

²²² As Baskar notes ‘Social forms are a necessary condition for any intentional act and that their pre-existence establishes their autonomy as possible objects of scientific investigation... society does not consist of individuals

towards methodological individualism or the proposition that all ideas and actions originate with individuals (Fisher, 2003a: 41.). Again as Evans states ‘an agent is essential to the voluntary and coercive dimensions of policy transfer given that policy transfer involves action orientated intentional learning. Hence, transfer must be a conscious process’ (Evans, 2004: 40.). However, operationalising frameworks of agential intentionality in explanations of outcomes (without accounting for agents as situated in existing discursive and material contexts) are fraught with epistemological difficulties. Indeed it is common for agents (especially politicians and bureaucrats) to assert multiple influences in explanations of their decisions or that agents may not always be consciously aware of how they acquired influences and learning²²³. For example, as Deacon notes in his own work on UK emulation of US active labour market policies, agents can assert multiple influences as inspiration. As one Treasury official states ‘the model that we looked at closely is Sweden, Denmark a little bit, Holland a little, Australia too’ (2000: 13.). As such whilst policy transfer may enrich empirical knowledge of substantive policy changes, by undertheorising agential and discursive practices and their location in structured contexts, understanding processes and the mechanisms behind ideational circulation are limited.

but expresses the sum of relations within which individuals and groups stand’ (1998: 206-207.). Indeed actors are necessarily situated.

²²³ Indeed, as Bhaskar notes, ‘agency is characterised by the striking phenomenon of intentionality as a feature of the neurophysiological complexity which enables them not just, like the other higher-order animals, to initiate changes in a purposeful way to monitor and control their performances, but to monitor the monitoring of these performances and to be capable of a commentary upon them’ (1998: 215.). Hence this capacity for second-order monitoring also makes possible a retrospective commentary upon actions, which gives a persons account of his or her own behaviour a special status which is acknowledged in the best practice of all the psychological sciences (ibid.). However, such knowledge of actions is only ever partial; conditioning discursive influences and structural constraints constraining and facilitating actions may operate in indirect ways over intentional behaviour (whilst agents will generally speak of making unconditioned choices strategies and purposes) and hence an analysis must seek to contextualise accounts of agential reasoning.

Recent Discursive-Institutionalist work has also become interested in ideas and ideational circulation, although the ways that agents, structures and ideational/material forces are conceptualised are very different to that of policy transfer literature. If policy transfer literature, as I have argued above, tends to under-determine agents and negates structural conditioning in explanations of outcomes, Institutional work (especially Historical Institutional work) has often had a tendency to over-circumscribe the potential for ideas to circulate, to have independent effects on outcomes and agential capacity to chart new institutional (and policy) paths. As mentioned briefly above, much of the Institutional work on welfare state analysis theorises (and empirically accounts for) institutional stasis and institutional immobility in the face of exogenous (ideational and material) forces. Hence these accounts explain policy continuity well but are often lacking when it comes to accounting for ideational and policy change. Discursive Institutional approaches have sought to incorporate ideas into explanatory accounts of policy change and trajectories of institutional change, albeit that many of these analyses set heavy conditions and limits to the ability of ideas to circulate, especially between national contexts and welfare regimes.

Hall's work (1992; 1993) on the spread of monetarist ideas is perhaps one of the best known examples of a Discursive-Institutionalist endeavour²²⁴. For Hall, to explain how policy makers radically shifted their beliefs about economic management from Keynesianism to

²²⁴ Although Hall would probably not name his approach discursive Institutional as such, here I am using the term generally to include all historical Institutional work that has sought to incorporate ideas into explanatory explanations of change. I have chosen to not consider other Institutional work (such as rationalist Institutional work) which has recently incorporated ideas in explanations of change due to constraints of space.

monetarism requires an understanding of the ability of institutions to hinder or facilitate new ideas (Fisher, 2003: 29.). In this sense, ideas are given transformative powers over institutions; Hall evokes the idea of Kuhn's 'paradigm shift' to denote how wholesale ideational change (or 3rd order change) switches the path of an institutional policy trajectory. Hall hints at how this process is drawn from ideational circulation outside of state institutional structures (although he does not elaborate at length on how such growing expertise on monetarism potentially transcends national boundaries nor specifically how American monetarist ideas found their way into British national debates). Indeed as Hall states:

“the 1970s saw a vast expansion in the outside marketplace for economic ideas. The media and City brokerage houses were important participants in this marketplace, but they were not only ones... new research institutes sprang up and a host of pamphlets about economic policy began to circulate” (1993: 289.).

However, the power of ideas (or policy paradigms) to transform institutional trajectories is situated within an existing material and ideational context. Unlike accounts within policy transfer literature, the operative forces which drive policy trajectories are institutions (containing both ideational and material elements²²⁵) that exhibit a relative resistance to change²²⁶ until conditions alter to the extent that a 'critical juncture' occurs, creating an institutional puncture in which new ideas can gain ascendancy. In Hall's account, an

²²⁵ Here Hall describes that the policy making process can be structured by particular sets of ideas - policy paradigms – just as it can be structured by a set of institutions. The two often reinforce each other since the routines of policy making are usually designed to reflect a particular set of ideas about what can and should be done in a sphere of policy (Hall, 1993: 290.).

²²⁶ Or in Hall's framework, utilising Kuhn's idea of 'normal science', normal policy making conditions.

unemployment crisis and high levels of inflation created numerous perceived policy anomalies and failures which undermined the existing paradigm. Thus underlying this analysis, ideational paradigms change, yet these are driven by an insidious tectonic shift in the material basis of the economy thus precipitating a structural basis for change (albeit that the change is explained via policy paradigm subversion and transformation).

Such an account is rich in the sense of accounting for how underlying structural change facilitates discursive instability, creating subsequent institutional policy ‘spaces’ upon which ideas gain ascendancy in the national context and, as such, accounting for how ideas are mediated by the existing institutional nexus. However, to argue that new ideas were the specific drivers of change in this account is difficult within this framework. Blyth argues that such an account is persuasive at the descriptive level but beyond that the analysis remains impressionistic; that even if ideas are important, it is very hard to say how important because of the confluence of other factors (1997: 236.). Moreover Blyth suggests that by proposing that ideas are powerful only when they are congruent with the ‘structure of political discourse’ and yet expecting such ideas to also be transformative creates internal problems within the analysis. To truly be transformative such ideas appear to be powerful only to the extent that that they can challenge and subvert existing discourses and thus transform institutions. Ideas are thus exogenous to institutions (2002: 22.). For Fisher, Hall has overemphasised institutions (albeit in ways that demonstrate clearly how they come into play) at the expense of the more general realignment of political forces that took place at the time (2003: 30.). Certainly Hall is attuned to how ideas are mediated by, or resonate within, an established cultural matrix and as such his focus on how ideas circulate (and come into being within different national contexts) is more limited. Ultimately Hall does not conceptualise

ideas as the independent variable per se as he invokes an underlying material basis precipitating change and then explains change through resulting ideational instability - ideas here are the intervening variable. However Blyth's point about the Institutionalist tendency to conceptualise ideas as being both a medium of change *and* continuity, creates problems when accounting for the incorporation of new ideas into a political system. Indeed, this is a particular difficulty in much of the Discursive-Institutionalist approach and has implications for analyses which seek to explore mechanisms of ideational circulation. As Schmidt observes:

“Showing that policy discourse exerts causal influence is not simple. First of all, the ideas articulated by a discourse cannot easily be separated from the interests which find expression through them, from the institutional interactions which shape their expression, or from the cultural norms that frame them. Culturally specific conceptions colour the manner in which new ways of doing and thinking develop, are articulated, and are adopted in any given country; and they set limits to the transferability of new ideas ” (2002: 250.).

Indeed, whilst Discursive-Institutionalist approaches contend that ideas need to be considered as part of the causal mechanism as ‘they may enable public actors to reconceptualise their interests rather than just reflect material structures and institutions [and as such] chart new institutional paths instead of simply following old ones’ there are institutional and cultural constraints which sets limits to ideational circulation (Schmidt, 2003: 129.). For Institutionlists, agents are heavily conditioned by existing institutions and therefore historically established cultural matrices which form distinct, nationally embedded structured

contexts, mediate and mitigate proposed ideational influence between different nation states. As Pfau-Effinger notes in her work analysing cultural complexes and welfare state development ‘new challenging ideas may start to compete with older ones within the cultural system if they are, for instance, imported from an international context’ (2005: 11.). However, like most Institutionalists, Pfau-Effinger considers welfare states to be deeply inscribed with specific cultural values²²⁷, which institutionally select for particular (general) trajectories of development and hence ‘the success of discourse is dependent upon the extent to which they can pick up on trends or contradictions in the attitudes of the general population in favour of changed values’ (ibid: 2005: 13.). Thus, once again, ideas are only likely to be causal if they sufficiently resonate with existing cultural and institutional structures and ultimately such analyses rely upon a material basis for change. As Pfau-Effinger notes ‘it can obviously occur that the degree of cultural and social integration of the welfare state declines and then possibilities for social or cultural change in the welfare arrangement increase’ (2005: 13.). Similarly with White’s analysis of ideas and the welfare state, ideas are not conceptualised as an independent variable:

“Ideas can facilitate actor’s understanding of their interests, but they do not shape those understandings. Rather than ideas merely facilitating actor’s understandings of their interests, ideas, institutionalised as norms, help shape actor’s interests and identities. In other words, preferences are the creation of larger social structures” (White, 2002, p.726.).

²²⁷ Pfau-Effinger specifies in her own account: The cultural foundations of welfare state policies towards waged work and the labour market; Cultural ideas about ‘social inclusion’ and ‘social exclusion’ and the nature of Citizenship; Cultural bases of redistribution; Cultural values versus poverty; Cultural ideas about the state–market relationship; Cultural ideas about social services, the welfare mix and the family (2005: 8-9.).

As such, the prospect for ideational circulation, especially with regard to the introduction of novel or potentially path-breaking, transformative ideas is heavily circumscribed as ideas are invoked as both the medium of change and institutional resistance. As White suggests ‘the content of ideas matters in successful policy development as well as the degree of the perceived appropriateness of new ideas with existing norms, rather than, or in addition to their service to powerful interests’ (White, 2002, p.727.). Whilst it is true to say that ideas that do not draw or interact with available existing discourses will be dismissed as strange or irrelevant²²⁸ and hence the Discursive-Institutionalists are right to argue that ideas must always have some particular ability to resonate within an established institutional matrix, this position tends to confuse ideational resonance with processes of institutional isomorphism. External ideas are viewed through the lens of existing institutions. Through an implicit theoretical assumption of appropriation and reproduction of an ideational system (rules, norms, values) ideas and discourses being studied will either ‘fit’ or ‘clash’ within and existing cultural nexus.

Hence it remains a puzzle to account for how innovative ideas and policy discourses may come to arise in different national contexts or indeed how to theorise processes of ideational circulation within this framework. As has been shown, under normal policy making conditions; heavily conditioned agents will be expected to resist novel or new ideas. Ideas (especially new ideas) only seem to come into play when particular institutional instability or

²²⁸ To take an example, before Adam Smith came along and offered a fully developed discourse on the virtues of the free market, it was difficult, as economic historians show, for the small businessman to express or convey such interests and concerns. Now capitalist discourse has long been one of the available discursive themes to which one can appeal – approvingly or disapprovingly – in an effort to be understood (Fischer, 2003a: 83.).

crisis arises. This can be seen in Blyth's analysis of the rise and fall of embedded liberal institutions in the US and Sweden and the spread of neo-liberal economic ideas, 'during periods of institutional stasis, ideas reinforce expectations and the generation of stability. This situation pertains most of the time. It is only in those moments when uncertainty abounds and institutions fail that ideas have [a] truly transformative effect on interests' (2002: 270.). As such ideas and policy discourses cannot be said to be the actual drivers of change; material structures and institutional conditions select for moments of change in which ideas will become causal; and in Blyth's account, the institutions must be at breaking point for ideas to become important drivers of change. For Discursive-Institutionalists ideas and discourses thus cannot be *the* cause but *a* cause of political change. In many ways ideas are the added influence which makes the difference or an intervening variable (Fisher, 2003: 30.).

As such, in the absence of deep institutional failure, the prospects for ideational circulation are therefore heavily limited in these frameworks. As Schmidt notes 'while cultures may make policy elites blind to the possibilities of new ideas, institutions may limit their receptivity' (2002: 250.). New ideas which potentially challenge existing ideational paradigms will be ignored by policy makers, or indeed if they do not find institutional homes they will not be able to sustain themselves over the long term (Beyler, 2004: 5.). Indeed in the absence of problems to solve or a crisis of ideational confidence precipitated by institutional failure it is, in actual fact, very unlikely that policy makers will seek to innovate or 'chart new institutional paths'.

In considering these two very different approaches which seek to explain ideational circulation, on the one hand, policy transfer literature paints a picture of ideational circulation

where ‘anything might go’ whereas Discursive-Institutionalist literature sets strict limits and conditions to any possible exogenous ideational influence. Both approaches have a tendency to exhibit methodological nationalism; that change takes place at the national level and through national actors (Stone, 2004: 546.). Ideational circulation occurs in the policy transfer literature through and between national actors; within Discursive-Institutionalist literature, as either a threat or salvation to national actors depending upon institutional structural selectivity. Neither of these positions explains how actual processes of ideational circulation might actually operate; the focus is entirely upon how change occurs at the national level. Whilst Discursive-Institutionalist work may have sophisticated answers to how existing discourses and ideas are mediated by particular institutional conditions and hence, quite rightly, argue that there are limits to what can be transferred from one context to the next, they contend that ideational structures (the intersubjective beliefs and discourses that comprise the ideational elements of institutions) will follow routines of reproduction and institutions are as such are closed to challenging ideas. In this way, the ascendancies of new and potentially path-breaking ideas, without institutional failure, are outside of this methodological scope. Indeed, whilst Discursive Institutionalists are highly attuned to processes of ideational resonance and make correct claims that existing ideational/cultural structures are necessarily prior to and in many ways requisite for understanding new ideas or new discursive frames, it is not necessarily true that their efficacy must be explained by how they may ‘hang’ with existing institutions or threaten the institutional complex overall. Indeed ideational resonance is a process of understanding and reflexive comprehension which pre-supposes an existing ideological stratum but does not theoretically select for a particular outcome for ideas regarding their interaction with a cultural structure. As Archer states ‘analysing ideological practices, their efficacy depends upon, because it is superimposed

upon, relations in the vertical dimension²²⁹ which predate them yet which they presuppose for their effectiveness' (1998: 197.). In this way, this historicity/temporality of vertical explanation is intrinsic to the fact that all legitimacy practices 'presuppose an ideological stratum that they did not create'; to be comprehensible ideas must resonate with existing ideational structures. For example, if we had not already acquired a certain ideology from the practice of doing the family shopping, Saatchi and Saatchi couldn't have presented Thatcher's welfare cuts as 'Good Housekeeping' (ibid.). As such new discourses and ideas must make sense (or be presented in such a way to make sense through framing) but they do not necessarily have to fit existing cultural norms and institutional structures. In this way, Fischer argues that although discourses take place in pre-structured contexts that limit or impede the range of possible actions, persuasive discourses can even in the face of entrenched social and material forces open new paths to action (2003: 91.). Explaining how such a process might occur requires an extension of the methodological scope. Indeed, whilst such 'persuasive discourses' and transformative ideas do not simply appear from nowhere, in order to explain how they can come to appear in places which are not generally expected requires analysis of broader processes which may be at work.

Increasingly and perhaps in order to explain some of the above puzzles concerning ideational circulation, policy analysts have looked to the transnational arena and the agents and institutions which comprise an international context of social (inter)action, or as Bennett has described it 'a transnational arena of communication, learning and influence' (2001a: 347.).

²²⁹ Vertical dimension is the historicity – the conditions under which experience is possible to agency (observing a cherry tree in England depends upon its prior importation from China, just as experiencing educational discrimination is posterior to a given definition of achievement being institutionalised or owing rent depends upon antecedent relationships between landlords and tenants. It entails temporality.

This research has sought to investigate the influence of global think tanks (Stone, 2001a; Rich 2004); epistemic communities (Hass, 1992); transnational advocacy networks (Keck and Sikkink, 1999); international organisations (Barnett and Finnemore, 1999; Dostal, 2004; Armingeon and Beyeler, 2004; Kildal, 2004; Mahon, 2005; Schäfer, 2006); general processes leading to the transnationalisation of policy (Stone, 2004); alongside changing governance structures, such as the EU and Open Method of Co-ordination (Sabel and Zeitlin, 2003; Zeitlin and Trubek, 2003; Hajer, 2003). Overall, much of this work seeks to bridge insights from international relations to comparative policy (Keck and Sikkink, 1999: 90.). All of these works seek to extend their methodological and analytical gaze beyond national contexts of policy making; to look beyond conventionally understood levels of analysis and chart different patterns of interaction which transcend these boundaries. This complex web of institutions and agents at the international level operates within emerging structures of (international) governance; creating new political spaces, contexts and networks in which domestic actors can ‘jump’ national scales of political action and develop new channels of communication. As such, this work contributes to solving the ‘missing link’ within analyses of ideational circulation. As I will seek to elaborate below, this work has the potential to enrich understandings of the mechanisms and processes behind ideational circulation and to highlight the actual and potential effects which the transnational arena has upon (social) policy in different (local) contexts.

Contemporary policy studies have increasingly called for a conceptual shift from government to governance (Mahon, Andrew, Johnson, 2007: 48.). As Hajar argues;

“we might nowadays be less convinced that the policy maker is automatically the agent of change... the shift from government to governance should go hand in hand with the appreciation of a whole new range of non-state actors that are actively mediating these new processes of policy making” (2003: 101.).

Drawing on existing work on policy networks²³⁰, which has sought to capture the involvement of non-state actors in certain fields of policy making and move beyond the dichotomy of (macro-level) state versus society-centred analyses, various policy analysts have begun to look beyond the direct sphere of policy making to investigate both the structural processes and agential action contributing to an emergent system of governance; transcending national boundaries and structuring new political spaces upon which agents, transnational advocacy networks and transnational policy communities organise and seek to alter domestic policy.

Policy analysts have also begun to look at the importance of international organisations in creating channels of communication between agents in different national contexts and as forums, or potential political spaces, which can facilitate ideational circulation. As Dostal states ‘the policy making environment has become much more crowded at the level of international knowledge management and the campaign on expertise takes place in many policy venues at the same time’ (2004: 456.). What is interesting about international organisations such as the OECD, World Health Organisation and World Bank, UNESCO (to

²³⁰ The policy networks literature, which draws upon Hugh Heclo’s (1974) *Modern Social Policy in Britain and Sweden*. Policy networks are described as mechanisms for political resource mobilisation where the capacity for decision making, programme formulation and implementation is widely distributed or dispersed among public and private actors (Mahon, Andrew, Johnson, 2007: 48.).

name just a few)²³¹ is that unlike *political* governance systems such as the European Union, international organisations are largely independent²³². As such, these forums are not clearly embedded within a domestic, cultural and institutional nexus, although many of these international organisations are located in the West and the organisational culture attracts and over-representation of Anglo-American personnel (Dostal, 2004: 446.). Being relatively independent and exogenous to national institutions, international organisations do not have to take political considerations when making their analyses or compiling policy reports (although often there are indirect political pressures) and are not required to take into account particular societal interests. Therefore, international organisations have the potential to exhibit an ideational fluidity that would not be expected domestically (Dostal, 2004: 447.). Indeed, international organisations are free to search for and produce data, to develop new ideas, or at least to re-frame particular policy ideas into transferable ‘ideational’ packages (Noaksson and Jacobsson, 2003: 42.). This type of disembodied knowledge is referred to by Peck as ‘fast policy transfer’; the proliferation of portable, technocratic policy tools that are designed to achieve reform at a distance (2002: 332.). Often in practice, international organisations seek to pick up upon policy themes emerging within various member states, such as lifelong learning or equality of opportunity, or transnational policy problems such as demographic change and post-industrialism and engage particular experts within the field who can abstract elements of nationally-embedded policy programmes and policy discourses and

²³¹ OECD (Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development); UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation).

²³² Whilst international organisations have a relative freedom to compose reports of their choosing and often appear to be ‘above’ domestic interests, the OECD’s funding, for example, is drawn from prosperous member states, of which 25% comes from the USA. When the USA became displeased with OECD policies in 1995, it withheld its contribution for several months – an action that led to budgetary collapse (Marcussen, 2002, in Kildal, 2003: 11).

re-frame such policies into transferable sets of policy ideas. In this way Kildal calls such organisations a form of ‘ideational agency’ where credibility is gained by helping national states concretise and diffuse ideas (2003: 13.). International organisations therefore, rather than exerting a direct supranational power, mainly trade in expertise, ideas and policy advice. Often ideas are taken from prosperous member states, which it then links to specific areas of activity, further develops and then transfers to less central countries (ibid: 10.).

In this way, as Bartnett and Finnemore state, international organisations are the ‘missionaries of our time’ seeking to deploy particular policy frames as ‘weapons of mass persuasion’ (1999: 713; Beland, 2005: 13.). Many officials within such international organisations have their stated purpose a desire to shape state practices by establishing, articulating and transmitting norms that define what constitutes acceptable and legitimate state behaviour (ibid.). As institutions, they exhibit a form of ideational pressure; prompting governments to adopt policies they otherwise would not by conditioning some governmental goal (for example debt rescheduling, developing lifelong learning educative systems) or the adoption of a policy (such as free elections, lower public spending, equality of opportunity legislation) (Harvard Law Review, 2006: 1482.).

In some cases, international organisations seek to depoliticise these issues of economic and social policy making into questions of ‘pure’ expertise to be dealt with from the position of ‘best practice’ (Dostal, 2004: 446.). Economists are particularly prone to utilising ‘best practice’ models of policy, drawn from national contexts which are considered to be the most successful in achieving a particular goal (be it minimising inflation, unemployment etc) and assume such models will be acceptable and desirable everywhere (Rose, 2001: 4.). However,

in many ways, discursively constructing particular policy frameworks as ‘best practice’ is better considered as a strategy to gain legitimacy, credibility and ultimately power. As those schooled in the works of Max Weber would be well aware, the depoliticised nature of bureaucracy is often a myth; behind the functional actor of bureaucracy, cultural values usually stand (Barnett and Finnemore, 1999: 708.). As Weber states ‘bureaucracy’s spirit of impersonality and professionalism makes it the most efficient mode of administration in modern societies... but is an ominous social force... the most powerful social force in modernity’ (Steidman, 1998: 80.). Moreover, whilst many experts and organisations make claims to being objective and hence seeking to install policies which are based upon neutral analysis as many post-modern theorists would assert, value-neutral evidence or knowledge is a misnomer; knowledge is always situated. Indeed, as Torgerson notes even the most dispassionate forms of analysis cannot operate outside the vagaries of discursive practice;

“there is no escape from discourse through numbers, for these operate exactly like metaphors... to count is to form a category by emphasizing some feature instead of others... to count as unemployed only people who have looked for work in the past month... excludes from the unemployed people who desperately want to work but are unable or too discouraged to pound the pavement (2003: 121.).

In practice, behind the veil of ‘best practice’, research carried out by international organisations can be identified with particular ideological or epistemological positions. Many authors view international organisations in particular as a neo-liberalising force (Peck, 2002; Henry et al., 2001.).

In part, the growing voices of international organisations and the expanding debate over ‘transnational policy problems’, especially in policy areas beyond the traditionally technical area of economic policy, can be attributed to an increasing ‘scientized’ or evidentially-based policy discourse stream. This is very much a two way process between states and international organisations. As states increasingly grapple with seemingly intractable and complex policy problems (of which welfare state maturation and various post-industrial pressures are clear exemplars) so in turn they turn to those (international) knowledge institutions which can capitalise upon their research base of specialist experts within the field to draw together technical policy solutions and rationalisations. Such policy reports often contain both highly technical data and analysis, whilst also containing executive summaries which are phrased in popular language and targeted at non-specialist audiences (Dostal, 2004: 451.). Hence policy discourses increasingly become ‘scientized’ whilst also stylised into simple ‘common-sense’ messages. In so doing, the international discursive policy stream increasingly speaks with reference to such ‘expert’ knowledge and technical justificatory data and hence domestic policy actors must, at the very least, engage with such discourses (even if to construct equally complex and data heavy refutations of various external policy debates and technical solutions). In this way, the more technical and complex policies become in discourse, the more states seek to explain policy rationalisations with reference to international ‘expert forums’²³³ that can provide worked policy solutions, rationalising discourses and data. In early example of policy expertise on policy, Weiss explains expertise encroaching on policy debates. Weiss found in her analysis into social research and its effects

²³³ Here it is not always necessarily that the advice comes from international expert forums, domestic policy experts can potentially be as influential, indeed as I will discuss below they may very well be the same people (especially in particular niches of expertise). However international organisations, by constructing models for the ‘solution’ of *transnational* policy problems, carry in some ways more gravitas.

upon policy making in the US that government officials used research to orient themselves to problems; to think about issues and define the problematics of a situation and to gain new ideas and perspectives (1977: 534.). Much of this is not deliberate, direct and targeted, but a result of long-term percolation of theories and findings into the climate of informed opinion (ibid.). Growing trends towards expertise in policy discourses has also been mooted by Hass (1992). As he states:

“Among the factors that have contributed to the uncertainties faced by decision makers are the increasingly complex and technical nature of ever-widening range of issues considered on the international agenda, including monetary, macro-economic, technological, environmental, health and population issues. Forced to deal with a broader range of issues than they were traditionally accustomed to, decision makers have turned to specialists to ameliorate the uncertainties and help them understand the current issues and anticipate future trends” (Hass, 1992, p.13.).

Indeed whilst there is nothing new about policy advice, as Fischer states ‘policy advice giving is as old as government itself’, the increasingly complexity (or perceived complexity) of modern technological society dramatically intensifies the information requirements of modern decision-makers (2003a: 2.). What was once an emerging concern is now a modern-day imperative: government decision-makers need ‘relevant’ information. International organisations both create the need for, and seek to fulfil, such requirements.

Whilst it is clear that international organisations have contributed to an important and growing international discursive policy stream, building areas of recognised expertise and as

such may be viewed as sources of reliable information by (certain) domestic bureaucrats, establishing direct evidence of concordance with international organisation's specific policy recommendations and national state action is more complex. Indeed most authors researching the effects of international organisations on domestic policy, when looking broadly at policy recommendations and subsequent national policy outcomes found scant evidence of direct influence (Noaksson and Jacobson, 2003; Armingeton and Beyeler, 2004.)²³⁴. Many International organisations, as mentioned above, cannot operate as supranational powers; they do not have the legal and financial powers with which to exert such pressures upon national governments²³⁵. In contrast to the European Union, most international organisations cannot issue binding regulations, directives or decisions for the design of national economic and social policy²³⁶ (Armingeton, 2004: 227.). As such, in order to exert influence, international organisations have no option but to play the 'idea game'; to formulate, transfer and authorising principled or causal beliefs with a view to constraining or enabling certain types of social behaviour within its jurisdiction (Marcussen, 2004, p.16.). This is a soft mode of governance; it builds upon a cooperative effort to criticise existing ideas and to generate new ones (ibid.). However, International organisations ultimately seek to induce national governments to consider new policy options and align with a particular set of discursive imperatives through multilateral surveillance and peer pressure. Much of the work of these organisations focuses upon the mutual monitoring and evaluation of national policies by other

²³⁴ In the case of Armingeton and Beyeler (eds.) (2004), the research looked at the impact of the summary chapters of the OECD's economic surveys on welfare state policy (see pages 7-8.). Even though the OECD's economic survey's had increasingly delved into issues of social policy, is it less likely that the recommendations of the EDRC will be taken into consideration on welfare issues than other directorates of the OECD (such as the Directorate for Employment, Labour and Social Affairs).

²³⁵ Although this applies more to international organisations influence over the West.

²³⁶ With the obvious exceptions of the IMF and the World Bank.

governments (Schafer, 2004: 14.). Hence Armington and Beyeler (2004) conclude, in a study of the OECD and European welfare states that as national institutions are secured and backed up by strong political coalitions, it is unlikely that criticism and arguments presented by a remote international organisation will cause major change. Whilst it is true to say that in the absence of direct forms of power, any organisation's influence must necessarily be therefore more contingent and indirect, a further complication is that many international organisations must compete with one another to secure discursive control over certain policy areas. Indeed, within the field of education, discourses such as lifelong learning and human capital rationalisations are not the sole preserve of one specific international organisation; many organisations have dealt with these topics and increasingly previously economically-led institutions such as the OECD and World Bank have sought to broaden the range of issues and policy areas which they deal with. Ironically, however, it is this competition over discursive control and the pressure on organisations to generate expertise in an expanding portfolio of transnational policy dilemmas that creates opportunities for domestic policy actors to shift scale and form transnational policy communities. In this way, international organisations become not just institutions operating as an 'agent' for change but potential spaces in which differently situated actors can mobilise to share knowledge, to develop and refine ideational frames. It may in fact be this very background activity which creates structured sites and processes for facilitating ideational circulation.

Stone states that the global arena is a highly fragmented one with a 'frontier like character' and such an environment 'affords better opportunities for ideational forces for policy entrepreneurs to shape political agendas' (2001a: 346.). International organisations which seek to develop specific expertise in various areas have become an important institutional

junction for domestic experts and advocates. Indeed, whilst international organisations have the resources and capacity to nurture specific intellectuals for certain policy areas (indeed such research bases are often much more developed and well resourced than domestic institutional functions), the increasing diversity of topics with which many international organisations have become involved within and the consequent demand for expertise, all alongside the fact that international organisations must compete on the basis of ‘expertise’, has opened up opportunities for domestic policy experts to engage at the international level as well as the domestic level. Whilst only some of these actors will become directly employed through these organisations, for example on specific policy projects, it is within conferences, government delegations and other forms of information exchange that can potentially draw in a variety of actors; academics, advocates, journalists and policy experts to a common discursive enterprise²³⁷, establishing a dynamic for research collaboration, cross-national engagement and networking.

Transnational policy communities, or advocacy networks are potentially powerful channels of communication, learning and ideational circulation. As Keck and Sikkink state:

“networks are communicative structures. To influence discourse, procedures and policy, transnational advocacy networks may become part of larger policy communities that group actors from a variety of institutional and value positions” (1999: 90.).

²³⁷ Even if particular actors hold different ideological conceptions or frame particular policy problems in a variety of ways.

It is within such communicative structures that actors can share expertise and information and develop common patterns of understandings regarding policy through regular interaction (Stone, 2001: 6.). Such learning processes can lead to common identities and consensual knowledge (ibid.). What is novel in these networks is the ability of non-traditional international actors to mobilize information strategically to help create new issues and categories to persuade, pressurise and gain leverage over much more powerful organisations and governments, as these activists seek to transform the terms and nature of debate (Keck and Sikkink, 1999: 90.). Whilst there may only be a few actors in one particular domestic context, operating with a particular ideological frame and seeking to persuade a national government of the necessity of implementing a certain set of policies or to challenge existing policy frameworks, international organisations and transnational networks potentially open up sites where these issues can be brought to the main stage. Potentially ideas and policy discourses can be brought into the international arena which lends them more weight (or at least potentially more air-time with domestic bureaucrats). However, of arguably the most importance when considering ideational circulation is that it is within such forums that processes of discursive mediation can occur. As those following a Discursive-Institutionalist position assert, ideas and policy discourses do not easily jump from one cultural context to another; they will be strange or irrelevant. Equally, policy frameworks are difficult to simply 'lift' from one context to another. However, potentially, these transnational communities can become important places where certain policy ideas can be re-framed (often strategically) so that they suit domestic contexts and domestic debates more favourably. This important discursive filtering process can potentially become the locus around which ideational circulation actually occurs.

To substantiate these claims that international organisations can be important focal points for ideational circulation and can create ‘potential spaces’ or forums in which transnational policy communities develop networks, I now seek to elaborate upon how particular EYEC frames have been taken up into the international arena and forwarded by a particular international forum: the OECD. I seek to explain processes by which EYEC policies have ascended onto the discursive agenda of the OECD during the 1990s – after a period during which the organisation had become closely associated with an especially stark form of neoliberal economic reform. I address how particular EYEC ideas have been reframed by experts working within OECD forum. I also seek to show whether and (if so) how the OECD has been important as a political space which has facilitated channels of communication between domestic actors and ideational circulation between the UK and Canada.

6.2 The OECD’s thematic review on Early Childhood Education and Care

The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) has long been associated with economic policy making and has generally been tarred with a neo-liberal brush²³⁸. Defenders of the European Social Model have often referred to the OECD as ‘a neoliberal stalking horse located in Paris’ (Deacon, 2007: 58.). With regard to economic policy and the OECD’s highest profile activity – the country appraisal mechanism (EDRC) - the Economics Directorate, responsible for these country reviews, is said to have spread a

²³⁸ Since 1961 the OECD has sought to ensure that its member states follow the code of conduct for sound economic policies laid down in the OECD convention. This is done through regularly monitoring and evaluating the economic situation in the member states and their respective policies. Every 12-18 months the OECD produces an Economic survey for each country (Schaefer, 2004: 5.). As Mahon reminds us however, the OECD has historically been associated with Keynesian ideas, although during the 1970s became an early convert a neo-liberal supply side paradigm (2005: 8.).

structurally determinist globalisation discourse, especially when required to do so by the USA (Kildal, 2003: 11.). As such, within the Economics Directorate, the welfare state is treated in standard liberal economic terms; that it is a burden for the economy and this burden is due to non-market institutions and goals (Armington, 2004: 229.). In this way, the OECD recommends that states intervene less in society and the economy, to free markets from public regulations as long as these are not indispensable for the functioning of economic exchange (ibid.).

Whilst economic policy ideas are the mainstay of OECD endeavours and certainly the most prominent, the OECD has been involved in developing social policy ideas since the Directorate of Education, Employment, Labour and Social Affairs (DEELSA)²³⁹ was established in 1974 (Deacon, 2007: 57.). However, for the most part, early DEELSA activity in this area served to reinforce the perception that the OECD operates within a neo-liberal paradigm. In particular, the 1980 conference that the OECD convened on welfare state crisis concluded that ‘social policy in many countries creates obstacles to growth’ (ibid.). Deacon argues that the continued association of the OECD with the ‘welfare as a burden’ approach stems from this publication and indeed for authors such as Kildal, the OECD is generally considered a neo-liberal threat to the welfare state (ibid; Kildal, 2003). Yet, for Noaksson and Jacobson, the idea that the OECD (at least since the 1980s) has presented a united neo-liberal front is somewhat misleading; in many ways Economics Directorate and DEELSA have become increasingly in conflict with one another over ideas about the welfare state (2003: 15.). In particular, DEELSA has latterly become interested in the ways in which social policy

²³⁹ Latterly referred to as Directorate for Employment and Labour and Social Affairs (DELSA). Education subsequently split to become a separate division of the OECD (Mahon, 2005: 9.).

can assist economic growth. In terms which appear to be influenced by ideas of endogenous growth theory and of human capital, the 1994 draft Ministerial conference document, asserts that ‘non-inflationary growth of output and jobs and political and social stability, are enhanced by the role of social expenditures as investments in society’ (Deacon, 2007: 58.). Similarly, within the Education Directorate, the Education Ministers during 1996 began to argue for investments within education as a counter policy to broader globalising tendencies:

“there has emerged a consensus on the importance of lifelong learning in meeting a range of educational, social and economic policy objectives... lifelong learning is a means of shaping the future OECD countries... countering the risks to social cohesion, promoting democratic traditions and responding to the challenges posed by increasingly global and knowledge-based economic and social systems (OECD, 1996: 27.).

As such, rather than social policy being a burden to growth, in the context of what the OECD views as an increasingly globalised, post-Fordist knowledge intensive economy²⁴⁰, certain forms of strategic investment could in fact create growth. Indeed for the Education Ministers, ‘OECD economies have moved towards a dependence on the creation and manipulation of knowledge, information and ideas... for the economy there is a positive relationship between educational attainment and economic growth’ (OECD, 1996: 90; 15.). This way of framing the benefits of investment in education provision is reflective of human capital ideas. Human capital focuses upon the economic behaviour of individuals, especially on the way their

²⁴⁰ Hence I would not dispute Kildal’s argument that the OECD considers processes of globalisation to be a real and objective phenomenon, although by viewing such processes through human capital ideas, the welfare state and other social investments are treated very differently.

accumulation of knowledge and skills enables them to increase their productivity and their earnings and, in so doing, increase the productivity and wealth of the societies they live in (Shuller, 2001: 19.). The underlying implication of a human capital perspective is that investment in knowledge and skills brings economic returns, individually and therefore collectively (ibid.). Whilst some commentators, such as Henry et al, consider human capital ideas to dovetail quite neatly with a broader neo-liberal paradigm, others such as Mahon assert that these ideas are more indicative of a newer social investment paradigm (cited in Deacon, 2007: 59; Mahon, 2005: 8.). Although initial OECD interest in ‘lifelong learning’ and other investments in education are certainly rooted from within an economic perspective, it does seem somewhat of a discursive-stretch to assert that human capital ideas and the development of endogenous growth sit easily within a neo-liberal paradigm, especially where such ideas explicitly rationalise increasing (state) investments. The devil as always is in the discursive details. For Henry et al., (2001) by framing educational investment through ideas of human capital ‘educational purpose has in large measure, been reduced to a student’s calculus of job opportunities and to the state’s calculus of maximum return on minimum input’ (cited in Deacon, 2007: 59.). However, the Education Directorate’s discourse, at least contained within *Lifelong Learning for All*, stresses somewhat broader and more inclusive aims. As the Education Ministers make clear, the implications of a changing skills base within the economy may result in a

“risk of new polarisation emerging between those who participate fully in the acquisition and use of knowledge and skills, and those who are left on the margins... future economic prosperity, social and political cohesion and the achievement of a

genuinely democratic societies with full participation all depend on a well educated population” (OECD, 1996: 13; 24.).

Moreover, the Education Ministers stress access and quality (which again departs from a narrow economist’s focus on maximising output from input):

“Ministers agreed that educational disadvantage which is not addressed early in life is likely to persist. They therefore assigned high priority to the goals of improving access and quality in early childhood education and creating ‘tomorrow’s schools’ that would effectively combat failure” (ibid).

The Education Ministers seem to have departed from the OECD’s broader neo-liberal paradigm. In many ways, the Education Minister’s discourse of ‘lifelong learning’ is much more in tune with those advocates seeking to forward a Educative frame for EYEC (at least at one end of the lifelong learning spectrum)²⁴¹ and these ideas dovetail quite neatly with broader ideas of human capital and social investment. The Education Ministers rather unsurprisingly viewed EYEC policy through a strong discourse of education and as such ‘readiness for school’ and ‘learning outcomes’ form the basis of EYEC policy rationalisations. As the Education Ministers make clear EYEC policy should have an educative goal:

²⁴¹ Whilst remembering that Educative advocates develop such ideas and policy frames without regard to human capital ideas.

“lifelong learning is not synonymous with adult education; it begins from the earliest years... enriching the early learning environment early on, developing a sound foundation for subsequent growth of knowledge, skills and values and a positive attitude towards learning are the key features of any coherent strategy for continuing growth and development throughout the life-cycle, the ultimate goal of lifelong learning (ibid: 99.).

As such, it was from this educative discourse of lifelong learning and through a lens of developing better education levels across OECD countries that engaged activity in the field of EYEC policy. The 1996 Education Ministerial meeting recommended that ‘synthesising the available knowledge base for early childhood education and undertaking reviews of recent policy initiatives and of ‘good practice’ appear to be urgent tasks’ (ibid: 115.). To complete this task the OECD organised a *Thematic Review of Early Childhood Education and Care Policy*, the goal of which was to provide cross-national information and analysis to improve policy making in early childhood education and care (ECEC) in all OECD countries (OECD, 2001: 3.). The slight change in discourse from ‘early childhood education’ to include ‘care policy’ is significant. Indeed, John Bennett, the consultant engaged to carry out the review, a former Director of the Early Childhood Unit at UNESCO, was keen to ensure that the thematic review did not employ a narrow conception of EYEC policy as simply ‘educative’ as operates in an educative frame and the position held by the Education Directorate. Bennett was particularly attuned to the discursive construction of EYEC policy and the ways in which linguistic divisions between care and education, especially in English vocabulary, had led to a historic separation between education policy and childcare policy and consequently materialised as separate institutions and services within Anglo-Saxon countries. As such

Bennett sought to discursively construct EYEC policy in an integrated fashion. As Bennett makes clear:

“We called the project Early Childhood Education and Care to underline that whatever we do with children at whatever age then education has to be a part of it. And we also added in care because care is extremely important in education systems also – and that is often overlooked” (Bennett, 2006)

Bennett and his colleagues, Collette Tayler and Michelle Newman, who were brought in to work on the thematic review, were operating with a broader frame for EYEC than that of either the Education Directorate or that of the OECD; one which sought to look at services from a perspective of equal opportunity for all children as its basic starting point (Bennett, 2006.). Being child development experts, the thematic review team sought to broaden the both the original agenda of the thematic review and the wider OECD discourse for EYEC. As Bennett stated ‘we moved the agenda onto two new avenues; on equity and on child development in the global sense’ (2006.). By seeking to frame early years and childcare policies through children’s rights, this broad conception of ‘ECEC’ was highly resonant with a ‘child-centred frame’. Moreover, for Bennett, conscious that many of the Nordic countries had already instituted highly integrated, well funded services which had a holistic child-development agenda, the OECD thematic review would need to consider an equally broad approach (Bennett, 2006). As the consolidated report by the thematic review team, *Starting Strong*, makes clear ‘The Thematic review has taken a broad and holistic approach to studying children’s early development and learning... recognising the growing consensus in the field, the review has treated care and education as inseparable and necessary parts of quality

provision’ (OECD, 2001: 3.). Moreover the thematic review limited itself to covering the period before formal school entry (whereas early childhood is commonly defined as birth to age 8) so as to concentrate more specifically upon ‘early years education and care’ rather than a broader *childcare* agenda (as a service specifically for working women), nor specifically a primary education agenda (or as such formal schooling) (ibid: 14.). This careful agenda setting of the Thematic Review was both strategic and implicit. Indeed, whilst the review team may have had a particular ‘child-centred’ vision of EYEC services and sought to create an agenda on this basis; the process of the thematic review made such an agenda much more subtle. As the review team states, the Thematic Review sought to analyse a diverse range of ECEC provision as possible; ‘all educational and care arrangements for children under compulsory school age, regardless of setting, funding opening hours or programme content [and] in addition... links with family support, health, employment and social integration policy domains’, whilst also seeking to ‘respect the diversity of policy approaches to ECEC [and did] not attempt to compare countries in terms of better or worse, or right and wrong, or to rank countries in a league table’ (ibid: 3; 17.). In this way the Thematic Review sought to engage in contextualised benchmarking rather than seeking to rank countries against measures of ‘best practice’ and utilise ‘fast policy’ transfer methods to bring individual states around to one particular ‘external’ package of prescriptive ECEC ideas and policy advice. The review team did not fully follow the broader OECD’s ‘best practice’ approach, but placed a higher value on the plurality of cultural values in different member states and hence seeking to ‘analyse the nature of and reasons for similarities and differences in policy approaches across participating countries and to identify the possible implications of the analysis for policymakers’ (ibid: 17; Mahon, 2006: 191.). For the most part however, this approach was necessary for political reasons; OECD countries volunteered to participate in the review of

their early childhood education and care services and as such the Thematic Review needed to be constructed in such a fashion as to draw countries into the process.

Within the first round of the thematic review, twelve countries agreed to participate, one of which was the UK²⁴², with the review carried out during 1999. Canada participated in the second round of reviews carried out in 2003. Government representatives from various ministries associated with ECEC policy (which for the most part was dealt with by Education Ministries and within the UK, DfEE) in negotiation with the thematic review team, agreed upon particular national representatives who would compile a ‘background report’ for their country. Here, national governments (who funded these reports) would have a clear say on who would compile these reports and vet the content of the report. Guided by a common framework and questionnaire this background report would provide information on the history and background to ECEC policy, current ECEC services and provision, conceptualisations of quality, levels of access, regulations, staffing, ECEC programme content and types of pedagogy, funding and evaluation and research (OECD, 2001: 192-195.). In practice, the background reports were quite varied in approach and upon the level of detailed analysis²⁴³. Working from the basis of these reports, a review team (comprised of an

²⁴² The others were Australia, Belgium (Flemish and French Communities), the Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, Italy, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Sweden and the United States.

²⁴³ Indeed comparing the UK and Canada, the latter has much more depth and scope. In part this was due to the different political systems; Canada’s particular form of Federalism meant that compiling Canada-wide data upon ECEC policy was a much larger and complex task. Moreover, that in a Federal system, more complex negotiation procedures were in place for commissioning the authors of the Canadian background report, hence many proposals to carry out the work were submitted, which eventually went to Gillian Doherty, Martha Friendly and Jane Beech, under Doherty’s childcare consultancy company (Friendly, 2006.). The Canadian Background report also had a large steering committee which would represent the various provincial interests (even though in the end only four provinces, Prince Edward Island, British Columbia, Saskatchewan and

OECD Secretariat Member and allotted each three peer experts, *Rapporteurs*, from other participating OECD countries) visited the country in question for 10-12 days, interviewing major actors involved in ECEC policy and practice, stakeholder groups and visiting examples of ECEC services (OECD, 2000: 5.). From this visit and extensive policy data provided, a Country Note would be written by the Rapporteurs which would then feed back information to the thematic review team on which a consolidated report; *Starting Strong: Early Childhood Education and Care* was produced drawing together insights from particular countries, examples of ‘good practice’ and policy implications of particular forms of ECEC provision. Although, both the choice Rapporteurs and Country Note were subject to some consultation, the thematic review team and John Bennett in particular could make strategic choices about who to bring into the review process. Within each rapporteur team, Bennett ensured that there was a mix of actors from countries which had very different EYEC systems in place; especially between countries with integrated universal provision (ie Nordic states and Italy) and those which had traditionally had a low base of (mainly) private services (being mainly Anglo-Saxon countries). Some of these actors had previously been involved in the European Childcare Network²⁴⁴. In some part, the thematic review team served to strengthen the existing ‘transnational policy network’ of experts committed to a particular child-centred or equal opportunities frame for EYEC, although officially such experts were drawn more neutrally. As such, the process of the thematic review was intentionally devised to facilitate

Manitoba volunteered to participate alongside a small visit to Ottawa, in Ontario). In contrast the UK team, Christine Pascal and Tony Bertram were freer to write the report as they saw fit and liaised purely with DfEE (Pascal, 2006.). From interviews with both Pascal and Friendly, it very much appeared that the Canadian report had involved significantly more negotiation and redrafting than that of the UK.

²⁴⁴ For example Peter Moss was brought in to be the rapporteur for Norway in the first review and Helen Penn reviewed the Belgium-Flemish Community. Moreover in the second round of reviews Helen Penn became a rapporteur for Canada.

mutual exchange of ideas, information and expertise through peer review. As Helen Penn, rapporteur for both Belgium and Canada (during the second round of reviews) noted ‘the OECD review [was] a very collective process and writing the reports is intensely collective’ (Penn, 2007). This review process (as outlined above) was particularly conducive to ideational circulation. It also broadened the circulation of ideas transatlantically. Indeed, the access and depth with which each rapporteur team engaged with each country’s system allowed for a detailed assessment of each policy profile and an equally detailed approach to assessing policy strengths, weaknesses and policy recommendations. By engaging with existing with existing state policy initiatives in a contextualised way, policy recommendations could be couched in such a way to appear to be building upon existing policy initiatives and appear more resonant with local discourses. Moreover, whilst the official OECD review appeared to take a neutral stance with regard to peer review, in many ways the teams were constructed in such a way to facilitate (or at least tilt towards) the circulation of particularly Nordic-inspired, or child-centred frames for EYEC. As such, the OECD thematic review created a subtle process for circulating or promoting a child-centred frame.

In the UK case, Christine Pascal and Tony Bertram, from the Centre for Research in Early Childhood at University of Worcester, were commissioned by the Department for Education and Employment (DfEE) to produce a background report for the OECD thematic review. Pascal had been involved in the formulation of New Labour’s early years strategy and both Pascal and Bertram conducted the National Evaluation of the government’s Early Excellence Centres and Sure Start (NES); so clearly this had been a political choice. The UK had already embarked upon an expansion of EYEC policy (albeit that in 1999 most EYEC programmes were still being rolled-out) and hence as Pascal noted ‘they wanted to do it because they

wanted to see themselves in relation to others. They thought that the OECD was an objective thing I think that would give them knowledge... they also wanted to showcase that they were doing something' (Pascal, 2006.). The rapporteur team were drawn from Norway, Belgium and the US²⁴⁵. Whilst the rapporteur team acknowledged in the UK Country Note that 'given this quite recent history impressive strides have been made toward creating a co-ordinated service', it was clear that the rapporteur team were seeking to realign recent UK policy initiatives towards a system which would be more resonant with a 'child-centred frame' for EYEC (OECD, 2000: 31.). As Pascal noted of the experience:

"In many ways they were quite critical of the English services and provision. They argued that the early years education system was too formal too soon... they were quite challenging in their report, arguing for the government to be braver and asked 'why don't you just go for universal children's centres instead of targeting things?'" (Pascal, 2006.).

Such concerns are reflected in the Country Note. In common with a 'child-centred frame' the Country Note cites the lack of universal provision in the UK compared to Sweden and Finland which 'includes all children under three... in order to ensure that all children have a right to quality, affordable, early childhood provision' (OECD, 2000: 36.). Whilst the rapporteurs note the importance of integrated services being developed such as the Early Excellence Centre pilot scheme, they question the lack of a 'comprehensive early years strategy from birth' and the 'ambivalence towards ECEC for children under three...

²⁴⁵ These were Ms Kristin Bruusgaard Arneberg of Norway; Professor Ferre Laevers of Belgium; and Professor Sally Lubeck of the US.

[reinforcing] the public opinion that programming for children under three is not “education” (ibid: 34.). Hence the Country Note asserts that a discursive split remains in the UK between ‘early education primarily for school’ and ‘childcare as a support to working parents’ (ibid: 41.). By seeking to incorporate ‘education’ into England’s EYEC policy, the rapporteurs make clear that such education should be based upon a holistic pedagogy and consider children’s well being in the here and now as within England:

“a school-based agenda has begun to shape early education such that early childhood is treated primarily as a stage to prepare children for subsequent school achievement, and less as a specific stage with its own unique approaches and windows of opportunity. Programmes that are tied to attainment targets cannot release sufficiently the inner creativity of young children” (OECD, 2000: 31-32.).

Instead the report cites (in common with a child-centred frame and that of Norway) the importance of creating ECEC policies which would view early childhood ‘as a distinct stage with intrinsic value, as well as an important period for primary school’ (OECD, 2000: 45.). The Country Note also suggests that ‘the creation of a Minister for Children and Education... might ensure that children’s issues would be dealt with in a systematic and comprehensive fashion’ (ibid: 41.). Lastly, and perhaps most reflective of a child-centred frame, the Country Note questions the ‘dominance of a rather narrow and technical research paradigm’ and instead urges the UK government to develop ‘knowledge of other perspectives and approaches, as outlined in the present OECD cross-national research’ (ibid: 46.).

The Thematic Review was conducted at an early stage of New Labour's tenure and as such the team were invariably looking at a rapidly moving target, moreover, the UK was already engaged in developing EYEC policy and as such the OECD would not be in a position to influence the setting of a UK EYEC agenda. As Pascal commented, the OECD instead 'added weight and momentum to the policy' (Pascal 2006.). However, the rapporteur team's concern with the fragmentation of ECEC policy and the lack of policy coherence were themes which were subsequently taken up by the UK government and especially by the Education and Employment Select Committee. Similarly, the development of more extensive provision and moves to make some EYEC services 'universal' became an important policy pillar of New Labour's second term of office. However, the OECD's underlying framing of ECEC through a 'child-centred' perspective and voicing criticisms from this perspective against a UK early years paradigm which favoured both 'evidence-based' and 'educative' approaches to EYEC had much less impact on the UK's trajectory of policy development. This positivist paradigm and attendant discourses had already become heavily embedded within the UK policy making context and acted as meta-frame through which all other policy discourses and EYEC frames were filtered. In many ways this served to constrain the ways in which a child-centred frame would resonate with UK government actors and despite the best efforts of both domestic actors and the thematic review team, the persistence of such mainstream EYEC frames in guiding policy precluded a 'rights-based' child-centred approach being adopted fully in the UK's EYEC policy discourse and policy.

The Canadian case is interesting for the reasons by which the Canadian government came to become involved in the OECD's thematic review and the fortuitous timing in which it was being conducted. Indeed, whilst the UK was subject to a continuous period of government

during the Thematic Review and subsequently, within Canada there were changes of government at both Provincial and Federal Level²⁴⁶. Such periods of change would provide moments of open space to discursive influence through which Thematic Review would be able to influence policy discourse and the framing of EYEC. Whilst Canada and Ontario had already embarked on EYEC policy during the time of the thematic review, the OECD was able to exploit these particular moments to subtly change the framing of policy towards more equitable and child centred ends.

As mentioned briefly above, Canada did not participate in the first round of the thematic review. The process of securing a Country's approval for participation had entailed the review team contacting relevant government ministries for early years education. In the first instance, the review team had contacted CMEC, the Council of Ministers of Education Canada. CMEC, however, did not have a remit for early childhood education (as owing to the structure of Federal and Provincial relations education is a Provincial responsibility, save for post-secondary funding and assistance) and as such the review team got a negative response²⁴⁷. Moreover as two Federal bureaucrats had made clear, even within the relevant department, Human Resources Development Canada (HRDC), during 1997/1998 (which was when the review team would have been seeking to ascertain approval to do the review) interest in early childhood education and attendant expert discourses were only just beginning to filter into the discursive lexicon of the Federal bureaucrats working in strategic policy

²⁴⁶ The Federal Level being the change of Liberal Leadership from Jean Chrétien to Paul Martin in Nov 2003 and subsequent Federal election in June 2004 which the Liberals secured. At the Provincial level, there was an election in Oct 2003 replacing the Progressive Conservative Eves government with that of a Liberal government led by Dalton McGuinty.

²⁴⁷ This information was kindly provided by Martha Friendly who relayed a conversation that she had with John Bennett's boss, Abrar Hassan, Head of Education and Policy division at the OECD.

development and hence there would not have been much political appetite in the broader HRDC Ministry and Federal government more generally to be involved in the thematic review (Goldman and Westlake, 2006.)²⁴⁸. In many ways, before any broad Federal interest in this area, by associating policies of early childhood with education, this would have been primarily considered a Provincial issue; in essence an irrelevance for the department and hence such ideas would also appear irrelevant to the concerns of the Federal government. Hence the process stalled at this point and the first thematic review round went ahead with the countries which had already agreed to participate. It is at this point which the existence of a transnational community of policy experts would play a key role in securing Canada's involvement in the project. Indeed it was owing to existing links between Canadian childcare advocates and UK academics already involved with the thematic review process that the review team could seek to draw in Canadian advocates and policy experts. As Martha Friendly of the Childcare Resource and Research Unit (CRRU) stated, she had become initially interested in the OECD's work through UK advocates who alerted her to the work of the thematic review and this recommendation was pivotal to her interest in it as, like many others, she had generally considered the OECD to be a right-wing organisation (Friendly, 2006). Moreover, through these existing links Martha had been suggested as a potential rapporteur and invited as part of a small delegation of Canadian bureaucrats, advocates and

²⁴⁸ Although it is out of the scope of this chapter, the position of HRDC (or at least the 'learning branch' of HRDC) had changed significantly by December 2000, reflected by the decision to jointly host an international conference with the OECD's Education Directorate entitled "Lifelong Learning as an Affordable Investment" in Ottawa (Verry, 2001: 9-10). Although ECEC policy formed only a small part of the Lifelong Learning agenda, where it did cover ECEC policy this was framed through discourses of lifelong learning and human capital, rather than the child-centred focus of the thematic review. However, there was one notable dissenting voice in a paper given by Barbara Martin Korpi, Deputy Director, Ministry of Education and Science, Stockholm, Sweden, which was much more reflective of a child-centred frame (Korpi, 2000: 4). Hence, in general this conference was more resonant with the official position of the Directorate of Education, OECD.

policy experts to the launch of the OECD's thematic review findings and consolidated report, *Starting Strong: Early Childhood Education and Care* in a conference held in Stockholm in June 2001.

The Canadian delegation who attended Stockholm was highly impressed with the thematic review process and the 'child-centred frame' for EYEC which had been elaborated (albeit subtly) in *Starting Strong* (Friendly, 2006). In particular, *Starting Strong* concludes that when comparing different ECEC policy systems, those which are particularly successful have 'pedagogical frameworks focusing on children's holistic development' and 'ensure *equitable access*, such that all children have equal opportunities to attend quality ECEC, regardless of family income, parental employment status, special educational needs or ethnic/language background (OECD, 2001: 126.). This framing of ECEC policy rationalisations through children's rights and attendant idea of a holistic developmental pedagogy was a subtle but qualitatively different discursive construction of EYEC; one which did not appear in mainstream Canadian policy discussions at the time (instead being dominated by neuroscientific ideas which construct development as a process of securing better cognitive gains and health indicators). Through their own exposure to this re-framing of EYEC, the Canadian delegation and in particular, Martha Friendly, Julie Mathien, a policy development officer for the City of Toronto and Kathleen Flanagan Rochon, Director of the Children's Secretariat, Prince Edward Island, were extremely keen to expose the Canadian policy stream to these ideas (Friendly, 2006). Hence, when the review team suggested that a second round of thematic reviews was being floated by the OECD, the Canadian delegation sought to lobby HRDC and Provincial Ministers that a thematic review would be a positive thing to participate in. In this respect, these advocates were successful, although the underlying

strategic context in which they were operating had changed since the time of the first thematic review which partially contributed to their success.

By the end of 2001 when negotiations over Canada's proposed participation began, one Federal EYEC initiative, the Early Childhood Development Agreement (2000) had been agreed with the Provinces (HRSDC, 2004). As such, Federal interest and activity in early years policy had already been established and the strategic policy arm of HRDC were conducting ongoing research into EYEC policy (Westlake, 2006). However, although the discursive link between 'early years' and 'education' had been established, it was not inevitable that either HRDC, or the individual Provinces would agree to participate. Indeed the process of securing approval involved protracted discussion and negotiation at all levels of government; in what is termed 'FAP discussion' (Federal and Provincial discussions²⁴⁹) in which Ontario and Quebec notably stood highly opposed to the review (Goldman and Westlake, 2006). Hence extensive lobbying had played an important role in securing Canada's participation, both to get enough Provinces to submit to a review and to secure approval from HRDC and ultimately the Minister, Jane Stewart. For the Minister personally, there had been a strong bias in the department and from stakeholders who had pressed to be part of the thematic review, but also the perception that the OECD study would be 'logical and critical' and moreover that 'measuring up is a very useful whip from a policy point of view' (Stewart, 2006). Hence, in a similar fashion to the UK government, the Canadian government decided that the thematic review would be an objective arbiter of Canadian

²⁴⁹ Which are organised through a working group consisting of HRDC officials and deputy ministers at Provincial level which consult with stakeholders and report back and forth, negotiating between Provinces and eventually presenting to the HRDC Minister (I am grateful to Linda Westlake from HRSDC for providing this insight).

EYEC policy and more specifically to the Canadian context, an external voice which could potentially overcome parochial disputes over EYEC between the Provinces. By May 2002, at the end of the negotiation process, four Provinces agreed to participate: Prince Edward Island; British Columbia; Saskatchewan and Manitoba with supplementary visits in Ottawa, Ontario (OECD, 2004: 16.). With Canada's participation secured, a second round of negotiations began to commission the Canadian Background Report. This was subsequently secured by a proposal prepared by Gillian Doherty, Martha Friendly and Jane Beach alongside a steering committee comprised of Provincial Childcare Leads and members of HRDC. The Rapporteur team was headed by Helen Penn (UK), alongside Päivi Lindberg (Finland), and Bea Buysse (Belgium) and John Bennett. Penn had been nominated by the authors of the Background report (as a consequence of particular existing transatlantic links) and Bennett had put the other members of the team together. Penn thought that this was particularly clever as the other reviewers had views 'which were in many ways much more extreme than mine... they both came from countries where it was absolutely axiomatic that the state would provide [services] and the real concern was how the state provided well' (Penn, 2007). Hence, as with the UK, the Rapporteur team was tilted towards reviewing Canada's EYEC policy through a child-centred lens.

The review was carried out between September 22 and October 3rd 2003. By this time a second Federal and Provincial agreement, the *Multilateral Framework on Early Learning And Child Care* (2003), had been agreed, giving some Federal direction to EYEC policy at this level. Yet in the main, EYEC policy and provision varied quite substantially between different Provinces and the rapporteurs found a particular paucity of provision in places. Indeed for Penn and the other rapporteurs it was shocking to find a low level of EYEC

provision in Canada; they had assumed that provision would be better in terms of quality and quantity, given such a strong and united childcare advocacy movement (Penn, 2007).

However, as representatives of the OECD, the rapporteurs were somewhat careful of their handling of the review (ibid). As the Country Note observes:

“The Federal government has become involved again with early development with some promising results. At Federal level, child development policies have been given some prioritisation and federal financing has been used to leverage provincial/territorial collaboration” (OECD, 2004: 69.).

Although, for the great part, the report makes clear that Canada and especially the Provinces need to move much further on EYEC policy, describing it current as:

“a patchwork of uneconomic, fragmented services within which a small ‘child care’ sector is seen as labour market support separated from child development and education. This fragile creation relies to a great extent on the voluntary work of women and survives with inadequate public financial support” (OECD, 2004: 69.).

The report makes clear that Canada lacks a consistent EYEC rationale and a limited conception of quality:

“the quality debate in Canada has been a restricted one... in the education sector, the quality debate has tended to focus on narrow readiness-for-school goals. In the care sector, quality has been greatly undermined by the struggle to survive” (ibid: 79.).

Instead, the Country Note seeks to overcome the auspice debate in Canada and ‘encourage the Canadian government to consider funding a publicly managed service for Canadian children from 1-6 years’ as ‘most ECEC experts argue persuasively that the quality of care being purchased in free markets is generally inadequate and in many cases dangerous to children’s development’ (ibid: 69; 73.). Moreover the rapporteurs advocate universality as an overarching principle for Canada’s EYEC system:

“the quality of a system must also include equitable outcomes. Access cannot be a preserve for the fortunate children in recognised settings but for all families and young children seeking child care” (ibid: 66.).

Secondly from an overall policy perspective the Country Note seeks to reframe existing ideas (influenced by neuroscience and mainstream education theory) of ‘child development’ as ‘cognitive gains’ to a broader notion of child wellbeing supporting a social pedagogical approach. As the rapporteurs suggest, Canada should develop ‘a national quality framework document...[which] would focus on broad national aims and on children’s holistic development and well-being rather than on detailed curricular objectives’ (ibid: 79.). In this way, by ‘stressing the developmental and learning aspects of an early childhood service we are not proposing that a mainstream ECEC service should be conceived as a school for young children’ (ibid: 69.). To this end the report states the need for a well remunerated and highly qualified staff; ‘specific early childhood professional[s] trained to work with both young children and their families’ (ibid: 71.). Moreover, to address the fragmentation between low

quality low cost *childcare* and scarce early education/provision, the rapporteurs suggest integrating these services as:

“early childhood centres [are] more effective when they function as community hub of interconnected services for families, and act as a frontline mechanism for child well-being screening and prevention” (ibid: 70.).

The Country Note cites an outstanding example and model of an integrated, inclusive community-based project, which has much in common with the child-centred perspective tuned to local knowledge (very much in contrast to the neuroscientific discourses of universal and measurable developmental goals). The rapporteurs found the Langara Child Development Centre to be:

“responsive to diversity, inclusive, offering imaginative activities, and grounded in the local community... Underlying the use of indoor and outside space was a clear pedagogy. At the centre of this pedagogy was a view of young children as autonomous, playful, resourceful and creative” (ibid: 47.).

Hence the Country Note ‘encourages the decentralisation of management to the local level’ (ibid: 70.). To secure this complex policy rationale through Canada’s mutli-level governance it is suggested that both the Federal and Provincial governments should develop ‘a lead ministry of child development agency given charge of legislation, regulation, financing, policy, training curriculum, monitoring and evaluation’ (ibid: 71.).

In summary therefore, the review team sought to take existing Canadian EYEC policy and re-frame particular elements to be more reflective of a child-centred rationale for EYEC; to determine a quality framework which is child-centred and stress holistic goals, to create a universal, integrated service whilst maintaining local diversity and to greatly increase the state funding levels to ensure the former goals.

The OECD's thematic review was given a much higher profile in Canada than within the UK. In particular was the profound effect with which the OECD's child-centred discourse had over the advocacy community. Indeed, there had existed somewhat of a split between a rather select group of academics and policy advocates seeking to motivate policy change through neuroscientific ideas and the much broader and larger childcare advocacy lobby which had primarily framed policy rationales for change through feminist ideas to support equal opportunities. The OECD's message of stressing an integrated, non-profit community based system which would provide both care *and* early education resonated with those advocates who sought and struggled to secure a high quality national childcare system. Hence many policy documents from the advocacy groups begin to draw upon (and indeed directly cite) the OECD's child-centred discourse and construction of 'ECEC' policy as opposed to simply childcare or daycare (CCAAC 2004; Campaign 2000, 2002; Friendly and Lero, 2002). The Childcare Resource and Research Unit (CRRU) in particular heavily promoted the child-centred ideas of the OECD and sought to recycle and republish the OECD's work (Friendly, 2006.). In many ways and particularly striking in Canada was the way in which the OECD's thematic review served to redefine and reframe the discourse of the advocacy community from primarily an equal opportunities frame to that of a child-centred frame.

The Canadian press, moreover, had been quick to draw upon the findings from the OECD Country Note, published October 2004. Indeed, the release of the Country Note made front page news of Canada's national newspaper, the *Globe and Mail*, which boldly asserted that 'Canada's childcare system is failing' and these findings were taken up in Senate debate (Philip, 2004; Canada, *Hansard*, 28 October 2004)²⁵⁰. However, even before the extensive media interest surrounding the publication of the Country Note, the thematic review was having a significant effect upon the EYEC policy trajectory at the Federal level. The thematic review served to create a shift in the discursive emphasis of Federal EYEC policy from a primarily neuroscientific frame with attendant discourses of child cognitive and health development (as embodied in the two existing multilateral agreements) towards a policy frame containing many discursive elements of a child-centred frame; creating a broad policy agenda which mirrored many of the OECD's concerns with Canada's existing EYEC system. Moreover, the influence of the OECD at a particularly fortuitous moment of time in Canadian political history allowed a reframed EYEC policy to rise to the top of the Federal agenda and to become a flagship policy of the Liberal government.

The ability of child-centred ideas to gain ascendancy in Federal policy discourse relied to a great extent from a moment of open space to discursive influence precipitated by a change of leadership in the governing Liberal party and the need to create distinctive policies which could define Paul Martin's tenure from the predecessor's, Jean Chretien. In essence, this created a brief period of openness to new and innovative policy ideas. As Peter Nicholson,

²⁵⁰ Indeed the release of Starting Strong II in September 2006 which ranked Canada last out the fourteen countries it had reviewed, precipitated the Standing Senate Committee on Social Affairs, Science and Technology to directly address the concerns of the OECD's report and produce a report, *Early Childhood Education and Care: Next Steps* (Canada Senate, 2009: 6.).

Principal Policy Advisor to Paul Martin made clear, with the (internal) election of Martin as Leader of the Liberal Party and Prime Minister, there was a feeling that whilst Martin (previously the Liberal Finance Minister) had an extensive record with economic policy making, his social credentials were lacking (Nicholson, 2006). Hence Martin's policy team were actively scoping for social policy ideas to define Martin's policy agenda (ibid.). In this favourable institutional context, highly skilled and organised childcare advocates sought to exploit these political conditions and alter the political discourse of the policy elite. In particular, Martha Friendly had sought to utilise political links to get an early draft of the OECD Country Note to the new Prime Minister's policy team; which particularly influenced Peter Nicholson (Friendly, 2006; Nicholson, 2006). Indeed it appeared that the OECD's Country Note provided an ideal contextualised policy blueprint for the innovative social policy ideas that the policy team had been looking for. As Peter Nicholson stated, it was an indispensable resource because of all of the knowledge, facts and figures which were not collected centrally, alongside international experience (Nicholson, 2006). However, underneath this seemingly neutral report, EYEC policy, as I have outlined above, is framed with a child-centred discourse. When the time came to create the Liberal platform for June 2004, Nicholson engaged experts from the Calendon Institute, alongside other stakeholders in childcare to determine policy elements of the Liberal platform. Much of the inspiration for the Liberal Platform came from the Country Note, as Nicholson noted 'it had a huge impact on the genesis of the ideas and the development of the argument' (Nicholson, 2006.). These policy considerations and child-centred ideas would come to partially overlay the existing federal policy discourse framed through neuroscientific ideas; a subtle but important shifting of discursive priorities and which would have a significant impact on the subsequent policy trajectory (despite some obvious internal discursive conflicts). Whilst it is important to note

that substantive policy decisions on EYEC are a Provincial and Municipal area of jurisdiction, the Liberal platform reflects this shift. In particular the platform picks up the OECD's discourse of holistic development; stressing the importance of social and emotional development and as a policy which creates social equity. As the Liberal platform states

“investments in child care and early learning [can] help to level the playing field for those disadvantaged by birth or background and because they set our youngest on the path to lifelong achievement...good childcare and early learning contribute immensely to the healthy growth of children, as well as to their physical, *emotional, social, linguistic and intellectual* development” (Martin, 2004: 28.).

Moreover, echoing the concerns in the Country Note, the Liberal platform asserts that in comparison to progressive European EYEC systems, for instance ‘Denmark has a comprehensive, largely publicly-funded program for all children younger than age seven’ whereas ‘the systems in Canada and the US are nowhere near as advanced’ (ibid: 29.).

The key change that platform makes and greatly reflective of the OECD's report is a commitment to create a national system of high quality, government regulated spaces around four key policy pillars; Quality, Universality, Accessibility and Developmental (the QUAD principles) (ibid.). In particular, the ‘Developmental’ pillar embodied the idea of integrating both care and education; ‘the programme must include a component of development/learning that is integrated with the care component’ alongside ‘high quality practices related to programs *for children*’ (Canada, 2005: 119.). In this way, rather than children being the subject of early intervention, the Liberal discourse moved towards defining services for

children. In many ways, the intention was to create a national system moving towards universal provision; a programme analogous to Medicare (Nicholson, 2006). As the later Liberal platform states ‘we will move the vision of a national early learning and child care system from being an ideal into being a permanent and tangible component of our national social fabric’ (Martin, 2006: 28.). As was developed more fully in the Ontario case, this change in EYEC policy discourse at the Federal level and secured by more significant funding would also diffuse downwards to Provincial and Municipal levels in the context of bilateral negotiations between Ontario and Social Development Canada (which made funding conditional upon plans which supported QUAD principles); opening up these political spaces and institutions to debate and define child-centred ideas, such as holistic child-centred pedagogy and integrated community hubs²⁵¹. Moreover this process opened up the Provincial and Municipal policy process to those experts and advocates engaged in research around pedagogy and other child-centred ideas (and in this way, experts from the OECD thematic review process and other advocates forwarding a child-centred frame.). As such, at different times and within different levels of government, child-centred discourses began to condition policy agendas and guide the development of EYEC services.

This chapter has sought to explain how international organisations have become important focal points for domestic EYEC experts and advocates; forums which encourage discursive exchange and facilitate processes of ideational circulation. The OECD’s thematic review structured opportunities for a transnational community of experts to operate at multiple spatial settings and transcend scalar levels; creating potential spaces where these disparately located

²⁵¹ Owing to Federal/Provincial/Municipal structures of government – the municipal and provincial level has jurisdiction over policy relating to service delivery.

actors could network, share expertise and exchange ideas. Moreover, the OECD sought to develop EYEC policy discourse, float different EYEC ideas and exchange good practices of EYEC policy with the intention of shaping the terms of the debate at the international level, whilst also seeking to diffuse particular frames and policy advice back to the domestic context, with varying success. In this sense, these organisations are best thought of as contexts or forums of social interaction, blurring the idea of an autonomous external ‘agency’ operating purely above the national context. As I have endeavoured to demonstrate these organisations operate both above and through national contexts.

Ideational circulation in this case is a largely indirect and complex process, precipitated by the communicative structures and discursive streams opened up through international organisations and subject to the mediating factor of particular contingent local conditions. Indeed, the process relies upon a complex of agents, structures, ideas and institutions operating in concert to produce similar but yet distinctive outcomes in each local context. However, whilst the processes and mechanisms behind ideational circulation exhibit a great deal of contingency, by tracing the channels of communication and the agents interacting at multiple ‘levels of analysis’, I have sought to demonstrate how particular EYEC frames have been brought into the international policy stream and circulated to specific local contexts. In the Canadian case, where processes of ideational circulation can be demonstrated the most clearly; the appearance of child-centred ideas (especially Nordic inspired pedagogy) within the policy discourse of a supposed liberal welfare state is both unexpected and difficult to account for, especially within existing approaches dealing with ideational circulation. Indeed, these ideas neither ‘hang with’ the existing policy discourses (some discursive elements explicitly challenged the prevailing neuroscientific frame) nor required institutional failure to

become causal. In many ways, the appearance of these ideas at the Federal level relied upon their perceived *difference* to existing policy frames; the moment of openness to discursive influence within the policy stream was a product of government actors seeking to *innovate* rather than follow (and hence reproduce) established discursive matrices. This finding explicitly counters what many Discursive-Institutionalist theories would expect, that cross pollination of social policy ideas (especially between different ‘worlds of welfare’) can occur in normal policy making conditions. These ideas, moreover, have had a significant effect upon the Canadian policy trajectory. As I have argued earlier, seemingly small tweaks in policy discourse and ways of framing EYEC can ultimately lead to qualitatively different services once embedded and concretised in services. It is necessary to qualify however, that in some part, the OECD’s ‘contextualised’ approach was conducive to facilitating the spread of child-centred ideas to alternate contexts and to influence domestic policy discourse. Indeed, rather than acting as a remote, external agent of change, seeking to offer decontextualised policy prescriptions and one-size fits all best practices (which are less likely to resonate with domestic institutions), the thematic review process drew upon the local knowledge of domestic experts and conducted significant analysis of existing policy, in some places utilising domestic terms and language to explain particular pieces of policy advice. As such, the child-centred EYEC frame with which the OECD sought to draw countries towards was somewhat softened by a process of discursive filtering specific to each context. In this way, whilst these child-centred ideas originate from a different cultural context, they are constructed in such a way as to resonate within specific local contexts. Hence, in this case, the OECD played an important role of discursive mediation. Moreover, by structuring opportunities for domestic agents to operate above and beyond their local context the OECD created potential spaces where disparately located actors could network and ultimately seek to

gain leverage over domestic policy making institutions. In many ways, this behind the scenes networking and discursive exchange played just as much an important role in the spread of child-centred EYEC ideas, indeed as I have sought to show, Canadian advocates were important motivating factors behind Canada's decision to participate in the thematic review. Moreover, once the policy process had been opened up through the Federal involvement with the OECD's review, local advocates and academics could seek to build upon this pressure to reform at the Provincial and Municipal level towards more child-centred ends. As such, as was stated from the outset, rather than ideational circulation involving straightforward lines of communication, power and influence, the process is reliant upon a mosaic of relationships (both agential and structural) pulling together in the strive for a particular outcome.

CONCLUSION

This PhD thesis has developed a detailed account of recent policy developments and substantial new state investments in EYEC in England and Ontario/Canada; two liberal welfare states. In both cases, EYEC services attracted significant policy attention and new investment during the late 1990s and during the 2000s, despite weak (or fragmented) institutional legacies. Despite some differences in both cases, the state has historically played a very limited role in the care, development and general wellbeing of young children. Broadly congruent with the archetypical 'liberal' residual welfare model, children have largely been the private responsibility of their parents. Historically, state conceptualisations of EYEC policy have been weakly defined; services have been (sometimes deliberately) underdeveloped, primarily directed at the margins to those 'at risk' and operated with a low funding base. Hence both England and Canada's recent attention towards children's development, care and latterly wellbeing makes an important and historically unexpected break with the past.

Again surprisingly, these new investments were developed in the immediate aftermath of neo-liberal austerity politics which imposed significant retrenchment in other areas of the welfare state. In addition new public management reforms enacted in both cases institutionalised managerial imperatives of efficiency and programme management at the expense of internal policy analytical capacity. These changes arguably had a significant negative effects on the capacity of women's movements, external (academic) actors and other progressive forces to make equality claims and entry points to make the case for EYEC policy (Jenson, 2009: 186.). Indeed mainstream Institutional welfare state research considers liberal welfare states,

following path-dependent processes, to be driven by a logic of retrenchment and cost-containment. As such, this new attention towards EYEC and efforts to expand the welfare state into new domains appear as a particular anomaly in these two liberal welfare states. The central question of this thesis has sought to explain in both *how* and *why* these two case countries have apparently broken away from their broader retrenchment trajectories and sought instead to innovate in new areas of social policy.

There are many ways in which thesis could have proceeded in order to answer these important questions. I could have adopted a similar approach to that of Jenson and Saint-Martin (200) and Dobrowsky and Saint-Martin (2002) who have sought to identify evolving employment and family structures that have precipitated the occurrence of new social risks which have highlighted, through risk-benefit mismatches, the inadequacy of the existing family-responsibility paradigm to adjust to these evolving social conditions and led to a general convergence in welfare state redesign around a new child-centred ‘social investment paradigm’. In this approach, these authors have identified the emergence of a new social learning network which has promoted a discourse on children and investment in human capital in order to combat and attempt to resolve these contradictions in the existing welfare state framework. However, this thesis has not taken this approach. Indeed broad ideological paradigms may serve as useful heuristics to capture the aims and strategies of political agency and to map the subsequent institutional configurations, but in the search for coherence there is a danger that all policy developments may be read through the social investment lens, even if some are not consistent. In so doing, these analyses may mask actual processes of change, the lengthy and broader ideational roots behind particular EYEC frames that have helped shape and direct policy debates and the continuing discursive instability of current policy

developments. In addition, that the qualitative texture, complexity of multiple distinctive policy trajectories will also be subsumed under a broader meta-logic of convergence trends. Indeed this thesis contends in common with Lister (2003) that not all policy shifts in EYEC are necessarily reducible to the social investment template, even if some are consistent with it (438). The idea of a paradigm stresses a greater level of ideational consensus and strategic coherence than has defined either the Ontario/Canadian or English policy trajectories. Moreover, other differences in the timing of social structural change – even in such areas as changing patterns of female employment (especially of mothers) which it may be expected to generate material pressure to reform seem to give us little traction in terms of the comparison between England and Ontario/Canada.

This thesis has adopted what is, perhaps, a more modest approach to capture the rich texture and unstable nature (both discursively and materialised in policy) of EYEC policy in England and Ontario/Canada and points of convergence and divergence between these two places. I have considered discursive instability through the lens of identifying six main EYEC frames. Historically the governments of Canada and England have framed EYEC narrowly. Nevertheless, extensive bodies of evidence and expertise have arisen external to the state, located around particular discursive ‘hubs’. These specify normative and prescriptive modes of state intervention in terms of reconciling care/early education and development and define the purposes of early childhood services. Each aims to motivate change and each is distinctive in focus. Whilst some entail an expansive role for the state and are potentially reconcilable such as the child-centred and equal opportunities frames, others exclusively focus on particular elements of EYEC whilst the maternal care frame acts to counter an expansive state role in EYEC.

My analysis of EYEC policy has centred on the dynamic interplay of these ideational frames through evolving institutional policy making structures which have at points sustained particular relationships to external experts and forms of evidence and at other points created potential openings in the political bureaucracy for other EYEC actors to re-frame EYEC and attempt to motivate change. There are some examples of significant differences between ideational frames which were prevalent in the two historical country case chapters. Perhaps the most striking difference was that whilst the maternal care frame exerted a powerful historic influence in England, it played a much weaker role in Ontario (although it does seem to have been more influential in other provinces of Canada). This may have also contributed to an earlier and more wide-ranging influence of the equal opportunities frame in Ontario than in England. However any policy consequences of the weaker role of maternal ideas in Ontario seem to have emerged in a larger role for the traditional nursery/kindergarten sector, rather than the development of extensive childcare provision. There are also points of policy convergence across the cases during the neo-liberal era, where Ontario's more established legacy of (albeit incremental) growth within EYEC services became exposed to broader retrenchment agendas, shifting the policy trajectory towards a residual model more in common with England's pattern of EYEC as Cinderella services.

For each case, the second country chapter has identified common institutional reforms which have altered the context and form of social policy innovation. These changes have presented new opportunities for particular EYEC actors to gain access to the broader bureaucratic structure. Whilst a wave of New Public Management inspired reforms appeared to establish a policy process largely closed to the influence of non-governmental actors and emphasise

managerial calculus of economy and efficiency, it also prompted a subsequent wave of reconstructive efforts to redevelop internal (social) policy capacity, which set parameters where new forms of external evidence and expertise would be privileged. In both cases, efforts were made by particular EYEC expert actors to exploit these open spaces in the political process and utilise new developments in neuroscience and outcomes from longitudinal studies to articulate the importance of the early years for subsequent outcomes and to force a reappraisal of the state's limited role in EYEC. In both cases, we have seen that particular EYEC frames have exerted a powerful pull on the imaginations of policy makers and precipitated significant phases of innovation and 'evidence-based' policy experiments in EYEC.

This phase of policy development has been characterised by a relative openness to discursive influence (which was much greater than orthodox accounts of liberal welfare states might suggest) but also a tendency towards discursive instability and strategic incoherence. Particular (competing) EYEC frames have fought for ascendancy in the political process. Indeed, whilst in both cases, governments appear to be unified by a broad acceptance that intervention and investment in the early years of children's lives is important, the qualitative direction of policy has been directed at different times and in certain places by particular EYEC frames and a variety of evidential bases. To some extent, this has depended upon whether domestic networks of expert actors have sought to link together agendas, as happened in England where initial policy experiments led to a 'scattergun' approach to policy making driven by distinct EYEC frames. In Canada, where CIAR experts worked in isolation, initial policies appeared to be driven primarily by the neuroscientific frame to the exclusion of other elements of EYEC and in particular, the care element.

As the case chapters indicate, and discussed in detail in chapter six, an international network of EYEC actors operating through international organisations such as the OECD have also played an important role in circulating an holistic child-centred EYEC frame. In both cases the OECD has had important implications for the re-framing of policy and extending the EYEC debate. The relative extent of policy influence has differed. In Canada, the OECD played a reframing role where direct influences over the federal Liberal Party created strong imperatives for reform (and injecting a child-centred policy lens at the provincial level). In England, it was an intervening role, as influence was more partial and indirect. Hence in the province of Ontario, the articulation of a child-centred frame has significantly broadened conceptualisations of EYEC institutions or ‘Best Start Hubs’ as universal, integrated spaces which attend to children’s holistic development, care and wellbeing *in the here and now* and not simply future orientated ‘human capital’ investments. Despite the switch of direction at the federal level, the seeds of a fully integrated child-centred system are in place, particularly at the municipal level which may provide a strong basis for future development of hubs, albeit at a slower pace. In England, whilst Children’s Centres offered a potential model of similarly integrated holistic services, the tempering effect of the social engineering frame which rationalises policy attention towards those primarily at risk has conditioned against universal implementation²⁵². Indeed following are more embedded ‘instrumental’ outcomes driven agenda, it is only the educative elements of EYEC (nursery education places) which have been fully universalised.

²⁵² And in so doing made Children’s Centres potentially more vulnerable to changing political fortunes. As David Cameron has suggested recently, Children’s Centres under a Conservative government would be stripped back to their ‘original’ purpose of highly targeted services for the most deprived and ‘dysfunctional’ families (Williams, 2010).

The significant investments and policy innovations over the last decade in both cases should not be discounted. Overall, however, it has proved very difficult to fully embed a systematic set of EYEC institutions and services. The instance and persistence of multiple EYEC frames directing policy in (potentially) very different qualitative directions, continues to block the full embedding and concrete implementation of an integrated, universal system, where the state plays a clear social policy role in the lives of young children. The countries may still be in an ‘innovation’ rather than ‘consolidation’ phase – hence it may be somewhat pre-emptive to conclude that EYEC policy in Canada and England is a story of missed opportunities. But both have a long way to go if their respective ‘flagship’ EYEC policies will truly put children at the centre of social policy development in the future.

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